

REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

As we begin this book of Revelation, I have mingled feelings. I am actually running scared as we come to this, one of the great books in the Word of God. Candidly, I must also say that it is with great joy that I begin it. Let me explain why I say this.

It has long been my practice, when I need a time of relaxation, to read a mystery story, a detective story. I confess that mystery stories have been more or less a hobby of mine over the years.

I do not read much of Agatha Christie anymore for the very simple reason that I have read so many of hers that I can usually figure out who the killer is, who committed the murder. Now I read Dorothy Sayers. By the way, she is a Christian, and she gets a great deal of Scripture into her books. The unsaved are reading the Bible without realizing it. Anyway, I have always enjoyed mystery stories.

When I began my ministry, I was a single man, and on Sunday nights after the evening service, I would get into bed and read one of the mystery stories.

Well, about one o'clock in the morning I would get to the place where the heroine has been tied down to the railroad tracks by the villain, and old Number 77 is going to be coming along in about twenty minutes. She is in a desperate situation. I think that the hero is going to be able to get there and rescue her, but I find out that he is in that old warehouse down by the pier, tied to a chair under which is a stick of dynamite with the fuse already lighted! Well, I can't leave the hero and heroine at one o'clock in the morning in that kind of position. But, since it is time for me to turn over and go to sleep, I slip over to the final page. A different scene greets me there. I see the hero and the heroine sitting out in a yard. I see a lovely cottage encircled by a white picket fence. They are married now and have a little baby who is playing there on the lawn. What a wonderful, comfortable scene that is!

So I would just turn back to the place where I stopped reading, and I would say to the hero and heroine, "I don't know how you are going to get out of it, but I tell you this: It's going to work out all right."

My friend, I have a book in the Bible called the Book of the Revelation, and it tells me how this world scene is going to end. I will be frank to say that I get a little disturbed today when I see what is happening in the world. It is a dark picture as I look out at it, and I wonder how it is going to work out. Well, all I do is turn to the last book of the Bible, and when I begin to read there, I find that it's going to work out all right. Do you know that? Emerson said that things are in the saddle, and they ride mankind. It does look that way. In fact, it looks as if the Devil is having a high holiday in the world, and I think he is, but God is going to work it out. God Himself will gain control -- in fact, He has never lost control -- and He is moving to the time when He is going to place His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the throne of His universe down here. It does look dark now. I think that any person today who looks at the world situation and takes an optimistic view

of it has something wrong with his thinking. The world is in a desperate condition. However, I'm no pessimist because I have the Book of Revelation, and I can say to every person who has trusted Christ, "Don't you worry. It's going to work out all right." My friend, the thing is going to come out with God on top. Therefore, I want to be with Him. As Calvin put it, "I would rather lose now and win later than to win now and lose later." I want to say to you, friend, that I am on the side that appears to be losing now, but we are going to win later. The reason I know this is because I have been reading the Book of Revelation. And I hope that you are going to read it with me.

As I have said, I approach the Book of Revelation with fear and trembling, not primarily because of a lack of competence on my part (although that may be self-evident), but many other factors enter into this feeling. First of all, there may be a lack of knowledge on the part of the readers. You see, the Book of Revelation is the sixty-sixth book of the Bible, and it comes last. This means that we need to know sixty-five other books before we get to this place. You need to have the background of a working knowledge of all the Bible that precedes it. You need to have a feel of the Scriptures as well as have the facts of the Scriptures in your mind.

There is a second factor that gives me a feeling of alarm as I enter this book. It is the contemporary climate into which we are giving these studies in Revelation. It is not primarily because of a skeptical and doubting age -- although it is certainly that -- but it is because of these dark and difficult and desperate days in which we live. We see the failure of leadership in every field -- government, politics, science, education, military, and entertainment. Since the educators cannot control even their own campuses, how are they going to supply leadership for the world? Business is managed by tycoons. And the actors can be heard on the media talk programs. Listening to them for only a brief time reveals that they have nothing to say. They do a lot of talking, but they say nothing that is worthwhile. None of these groups or segments of our society have any solutions. They are failures in the realm of leadership. There is a glaring lack of leadership. There is no one to lead us out of this moral morass or out of the difficult and Laocoon-like problems which have us all tangled up. We are living in a very difficult time, my friend. In fact, I think that it is one of the worst in the history of the church.

Knowledgeable men have been saying some very interesting things about this present hour. Please note that I am not quoting from any preachers but from outstanding men in other walks of life.

Dr. Urey, from the University of Chicago, who worked on the atomic bomb, began an article several years ago in Collier's magazine by saying, "I am a frightened man, and I want to frighten you."

Dr. John R. Mott returned from a trip around the world and made the statement that this was "the most dangerous era the world has ever known." And he raised the question of where we are heading. Then he made this further statement, "When I think of human tragedy, as I saw it and felt it, of the Christian ideals sacrificed as they have been, the thought comes to me that God is preparing the way for some immense direct action."

Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins, of the University of Chicago, gave many people a shock several years ago when he made the statement that "devoting our educational efforts to

infants between six and twenty-one seems futile." And he added, "The world may not last long enough." He contended that for this reason we should begin adult education.

Winston Churchill said, "Time may be short."

Mr. Luce, the owner of Life, Time, and Fortune magazines, addressed a group of missionaries who were the first to return to their fields after the war. Speaking in San Francisco, he made the statement that when he was a boy, the son of a Presbyterian missionary in China, he and his father often discussed the premillennial coming of Christ, and he thought that all missionaries who believed in that teaching were inclined to be fanatical. And then Mr. Luce said, "I wonder if there wasn't something to that position after all."

It is very interesting to note that The Christian Century carried an article by Wesner Fallaw which said, "A function of the Christian is to make preparation for world's end."

Dr. Charles Beard, the American historian, said, "All over the world the thinkers and searchers who scan the horizon of the future are attempting to assess the values of civilization and speculating about its destiny."

Dr. William Yogi, in the Road to Civilization, wrote: "The handwriting on the wall of five continents now tells us that the Day of Judgment is at hand."

Dr. Raymond B. Fosdick, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, said, "To many ears comes the sound of the trump of doom. Time is short."

H. G. Wells declared before he died, "This world is at the end of its tether. The end of everything we call life is close at hand."

General Douglas MacArthur said, "We have had our last chance."

Former president Dwight Eisenhower said, "Without a moral regeneration throughout the world there is no hope for us as we are going to disappear one day in the dust of an atomic explosion."

Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, ex-president of Columbia University, said, "The end cannot be far distant."

To make the picture even more bleak, the modern church has no solutions for the problems of this hour in which we are living. There was a phenomenal growth in church membership, especially after World War II, but that took place for only a few years. The growth went from 20 percent of the population in 1884 to 35 percent of the population in 1959. That was the high point of Protestant church membership. And it would indicate the possibility of a church on fire for God. Then it had wealth and was building tremendous programs, but recently the church has begun to lose, and it certainly is not affecting the contemporary culture of the present hour.

As far back as 1958 the late David Lawrence wrote an editorial which he entitled "The 'Mess' in the World." He described it very accurately, but even he did not have a solution for it. As we look out at the world in this present hour, we see that it is really in a mess.

For a long time now men in high positions have looked into the future and have said that there is a great crisis coming. (I wonder what they would say if they lived in our day!) As a result of this foreboding, there has been a growing interest in the Book of Revelation.

Although good expositors differ on the details of the Book of Revelation, when it comes to the broad interpretation, there are four major systems. (Broadus lists seven theories of interpretation and Tregelles lists three.)

1. The preterist interpretation is that all of Revelation has been fulfilled in the past. It had to do with local references in John's day and with the days of either Nero or Domitian. This view was held by Renan and by most German scholars, also by Elliott. The purpose of the Book of Revelation was to bring comfort to the persecuted church and was written in symbols that the Christians of that period would understand.

Now let me say that it was for the comfort of God's people, and it has been that for all ages, but to hold the preterist interpretation means that you might as well take the Book of Revelation out of the Bible, as it has no meaning at all for the present hour. This viewpoint has been answered and, I think, relegated to the limbo of lost things.

2. The historical interpretation is that the fulfillment of Revelation is going on continuously in the history of the church, from John's day to the present time. Well, I believe that there is a certain amount of truth in this as far as the seven churches are concerned, as we shall see, but beyond that, it is obvious that the Book of Revelation is prophetic.

3. The historical-spiritualist interpretation is a refinement of the historical theory and was advanced first by Sir William Ramsay. This theory states that the two beasts are imperial and provincial Rome and that the point of the book is to encourage Christians. According to this theory, Revelation has been largely fulfilled and contains only spiritual lessons for the church today.

The system we know today as amillennialism has, for the most part, adopted this view. It dissipates and defeats the purpose of the book. In the seminary of my denomination, I studied Revelation in both Greek and English from the standpoint of the amillennialist. It was amazing to see how the facts of the Revelation could be dissipated into thin air by just saying, "Well, these are symbols." But they never were able to tell us exactly what they were symbols of. That was their problem. The fact of the matter is that some very unusual interpretations arise from this viewpoint. One interpreter sees Luther and the Reformation in a symbol that to another student pictures the invention of the printing press! In my opinion, interpretations of this type have hurt and defeated the purpose of the Book of Revelation.

4. The futurist interpretation is the view which is held by all premillennialists and is the one which I accept and present to you. It sees the Book of Revelation as primarily prophetic. Most premillennialists follow a certain form of interpretation that conforms to the Book of Revelation. (We will see this in the outline of the book.) It begins with the revelation of the glorified Christ. Then the church is brought before us, and the whole history of the church is given. Then, at the end of chapter 3, the church goes to heaven and we see it, not as the church anymore, but as the bride which will come to the earth

with Christ when He comes to establish His Kingdom -- that thousand-year reign that John will tell us about. It will be a time of testing, for at the end of that period Satan will be released for a brief season. Then the final rebellion is put down and eternity begins. This is the viewpoint of Revelation which is generally accepted.

In our day there are many critics of this interpretation who not only attempt to discount it but say rather harsh things about it. One recent book of criticism, written by a layman, quotes me as being unable to answer his argument. Well, the fact of the matter is that he called me at home one morning as I was getting ready to go to my office. I wasn't well at the time, and I didn't want to get involved in an argument with a man who obviously was very fanatical in his position. In his book he makes the statement that I was unable to answer his question. If he misquotes the other Bible expositors as he misquotes me, I would have no confidence in his book whatsoever.

In his book he maintains that the premillennial futurist viewpoint is something that is brand new. I'll admit that it has been fully developed, as have all these other interpretations, during the past few years. When I was a young man and a new Christian, I was introduced to the theory known as postmillennialism. The postmillennialists believed that the world would get better and better, that the church would convert the whole world, and then Christ would come and reign. Well, that viewpoint is almost dead today. After two world wars, a worldwide depression, and the crises through which the world is passing, there are very few who still hold that viewpoint. By the time I enrolled in the seminary of my denomination, every professor was an amillennialist, that is, they didn't believe in a Millennium. It was to that view that most of the postmillennialists ran for cover. There was one professor in the seminary who was still a postmillennialist. He was very old and hard of hearing. In fact, when they told him that the war was over, he thought they meant the Civil War. He was really a back number, and he was still a postmillennialist.

At the risk of being a little tedious, I am going to give you the viewpoints of many men in the past to demonstrate that they were looking for Christ to return. They were not looking for the Great Tribulation, they were not even looking for the Millennium, but they were looking for Him to come. This expectation is the very heart of the premillennial viewpoint as we hold it today.

Barnabas, who was a co-worker with the apostle Paul, has been quoted as saying, "The true Sabbath is the one thousand years . . . when Christ comes back to reign."

Clement (B.C. 96), Bishop of Rome, said, "Let us every hour expect the kingdom of God . . . we know not the day."

Polycarp (B.C. 108), Bishop of Smyrna and finally burned at the stake there, said, "He will raise us from the dead . . . we shall . . . reign with Him."

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who the historian Eusebius says was the apostle Peter's successor, commented, "Consider the times and expect Him."

Papias (B.C. 116), Bishop of Hierapolis, who -- according to Irenaeus -- saw and heard the apostle John, said, "There will be one thousand years . . . when the reign of Christ personally will be established on earth."

Justin Martyr (B.C. 150) said, "I and all others who are orthodox Christians, on all points, know there will be a thousand years in Jerusalem . . . as Isaiah and Ezekiel declared."

Irenaeus (B.C. 175), Bishop of Lyons, commenting on Jesus' promise to drink again of the fruit of the vine in His Father's Kingdom, argues: "That this . . . can only be fulfilled upon our Lord's personal return to earth."

Tertullian (B.C. 200) said, "We do indeed confess that a kingdom is promised on earth."

Martin Luther said, "Let us not think that the coming of Christ is far off."

John Calvin, in his third book of Institutes, wrote: "Scripture uniformly enjoins us to look with expectation for the advent of Christ."

Canon A. R. Fausset said this: "The early Christian fathers, Clement, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, looked for the Lord's speedy return as the necessary precursor of the millennial kingdom. Not until the professing Church lost her first love, and became the harlot resting on the world power, did she cease to be the Bride going forth to meet the Bridegroom, and seek to reign already on earth without waiting for His Advent."

Dr. Elliott wrote: "All primitive expositors, except Origen and the few who rejected Revelation, were premillennial."

Gussler's work on church history says of this blessed hope that "it was so distinctly and prominently mentioned that we do not hesitate in regarding it as the general belief of that age."

Chillingworth declared: "It was the doctrine believed and taught by the most eminent fathers of the age next to the apostles and by none of that age condemned."

Dr. Adolf von Harnack wrote: "The earlier fathers -- Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, etc. -- believed it because it was part of the tradition of the early church. It is the same all through the third and fourth centuries with those Latin theologians who escaped the influence of Greek speculation."

My friend, I have quoted these many men of the past as proof of the fact that from the days of the apostles and through the church of the first centuries the interpretation of the Scriptures was premillennial. When someone makes the statement that premillennialism is something that originated one hundred years ago with an old witch in England, he doesn't know what he is talking about. It is interesting to note that premillennialism was the belief of these very outstanding men of the early church.

There are six striking and singular features about the Book of Revelation.

1. It is the only prophetic book in the New Testament. There are seventeen prophetic books in the Old Testament and only this one in the New Testament.

2. John, the writer, reaches farther back into eternity past than does any other writer in Scripture. He does this in his Gospel which opens with this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" ([John 1:1](#)). Then he moves up to the time of creation: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" ([John 1:3](#)). Then, when John writes the Book of Revelation, he reaches farther on into eternity future and the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

3. There is a special blessing which is promised to the readers of this book: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" ([Rev. 1:3](#)). It is a blessing promise. Also, there is a warning given at the end of the book issued to those who tamper with its contents: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" ([Rev. 22:18-19](#)). That warning ought to make these wild and weird interpreters of prophecy stop, look, and listen. It is dangerous to say just anything relative to the Book of Revelation because people today realize that we have come to a great crisis in history. To say something that is entirely out of line is to mislead them. Unfortunately, the most popular prophetic teachers in our day are those who have gone out on a limb. This has raised a very serious problem, and later on we will have repercussions from it.

4. It is not a sealed book. Daniel was told to seal the book until the time of the end (see [Dan. 12:9](#)), but John is told: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" ([Rev. 22:10](#)). To say that the Book of Revelation is a jumble and impossible to make heads or tails out of and cannot be understood is to contradict this. It is not a sealed book. In fact, it is probably the best organized book in the Bible.

5. It is a series of visions expressed in symbols which deal with reality. The literal interpretation is always preferred unless John makes it clear that it is otherwise.

6. It is like a great union station where the great trunk lines of prophecy have come in from other portions of Scripture. Revelation does not originate or begin anything. Rather it consummates and concludes that which has been begun somewhere else in Scripture. It is imperative to a right understanding of the book to be able to trace each great subject of prophecy from the first reference to the terminal. There are at least ten great subjects of prophecy which find their consummation here. This is the reason that a knowledge of the rest of the Bible is imperative to an understanding of the Book of Revelation. It is calculated that there are over five hundred references or allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation and that, of its 404 verses, 278 contain references to the Old Testament. In other words, over half of this book depends upon your understanding of the Old Testament.

Let's look at the Book of Revelation as an airport with ten great airlines coming into it. We need to understand where each began and how it was developed as it comes into the

Book of Revelation. The ten great subjects of prophecy which find their consummation here are these:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the subject of the book. The subject is not the beasts nor the bowls of wrath but the Sin-bearer. The first mention of Him is way back in [Genesis 3:15](#), as the Seed of the woman.
2. The church does not begin in the Old Testament. It is first mentioned by the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 16:18](#): "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
3. The resurrection and the translation of the saints (see [John 14](#); [1Thess. 4:13-18](#); [1Cor. 15:51-52](#)).
4. The Great Tribulation, spoken of back in [Deuteronomy 4](#) where God says that His people would be in tribulation.
5. Satan and evil (see [Ezek. 28:11-18](#)).
6. The "man of sin" (see [Ezek. 28:1-10](#)).
7. The course and end of apostate Christendom (see [Dan. 2:31-45](#); [Matt. 13](#)).
8. The beginning, course, and end of the "times of the Gentiles" (see [Dan. 2:37-45](#); [Luke 21:24](#)). The Lord Jesus said that Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
9. The second coming of Christ. According to [Jude 14-15](#), Enoch spoke of that, which takes us back to the time of the Genesis record.
10. Israel's covenants, beginning with the covenant which God made with Abraham in [Genesis 12:1-3](#). God promised Israel five things, and God says in Revelation that He will fulfill them all.

Now I want to make a positive statement: The Book of Revelation is not a difficult book. The liberal theologian has tried to make it a difficult book, and the amillennialist considers it a symbolic and hard-to-understand book. Even some of our premillennialists are trying to demonstrate that it is weird and wild.

Actually, it is the most orderly book in the Bible. And there is no reason to misunderstand it. This is what I mean: It divides itself. John puts down the instructions given to him by Christ: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" ([Rev. 1:19](#)) -- past, present, and future. Then we will find that the book further divides itself in series of sevens, and each division is as orderly as it possibly can be. You will find no other book in the Bible that divides itself like that.

To those who claim that it is all symbolic and beyond our understanding, I say that the Book of Revelation is to be taken literally. And when a symbol is used, it will be so stated. Also it will be symbolic of reality, and the reality will be more real than the symbol for the simple reason that John uses symbols to describe reality. In our study of

the book, that is an all-important principle to follow. Let's allow the Revelation to say what it wants to say.

Therefore, we have no right to reach into the book and draw out of it some of the wonderful pictures that John describes for us and interpret them as taking place in our day. Some of them are symbolic, symbolic of reality, but not of a reality which is currently taking place.

The church is set before us in the figure of seven churches which were real churches in existence in John's day. I have visited the ruins of all seven of them and have spent many hours there. In fact, I have visited some of them on four occasions, and I would love to go back tomorrow. To examine the ruins and study the locality is a very wonderful experience. It has made these churches live for me, and I can see how John was speaking into local situations but also giving the history of the church as a whole.

Then after chapter 3, the church is not mentioned anymore. The church is not the subject again in the entire Book of the Revelation. You may ask, "Do you mean that the church goes out of business?" Well, it leaves the earth and goes to heaven, and there it appears as the bride of Christ. When we see her in the last part of Revelation, she is not the church but the bride.

Then beginning with chapter 4, everything is definitely in the future from our vantage point at the present time. So when anyone reaches in and pulls out a revelation -- some vision about famine or wars or anything of that sort -- it just does not fit into the picture of our day. We need to let John tell it like it is. In fact, we need to let the whole Bible speak to us like that -- just let it say what it wants to say. The idea of making wild and weird interpretations is one of the reasons I enter this book with a feeling of fear.

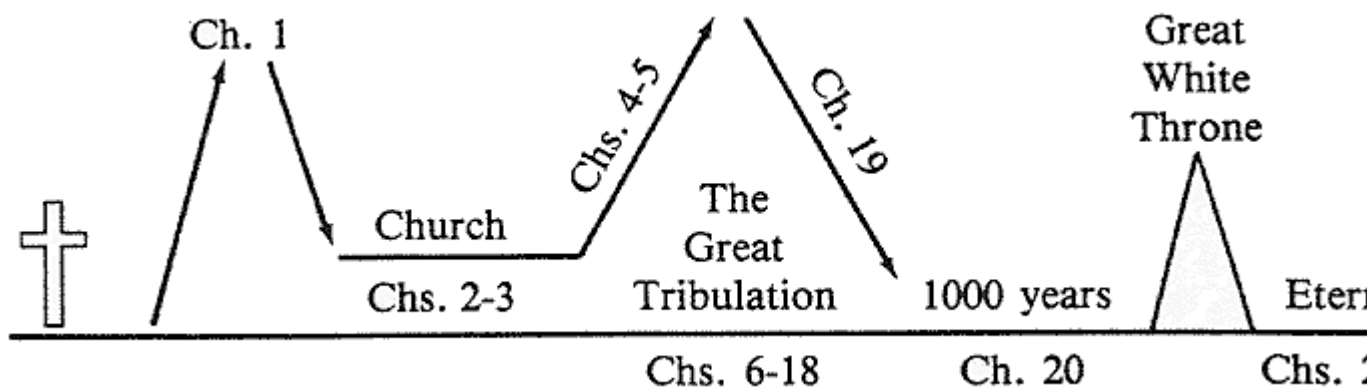
It is interesting to note that the subject of prophecy is being developed in our day. The great doctrines of the church have been developed in certain historical periods. At first, it was the doctrine of the Scripture being the Word of God. This was followed by the doctrine of the person of Christ, known as Christology. Then the doctrine of soteriology, or salvation, was developed. And so it has been down through the years. Now you and I are living in a day when prophecy is really being developed, and we need to exercise care as to what and to whom we listen.

When the Pilgrims sailed for America, their pastor at Leyden reminded them, "The Lord has more truth yet to break forth from His Holy Word. . . . Luther and Calvin were great shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not the whole counsel of God. . . . Be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God." That, my friend, is very good advice because God is not revealing His truth by giving you a vision or a dream or a new religion. Therefore, we need to be very sure that all new truth comes from a correct interpretation of the Word of God.

As I have indicated, the twentieth century has witnessed a renewed interest in eschatology (the doctrine of last things) which we call prophecy. Especially since World War I, great strides have been made in this field. New light has fallen upon this phase of Scripture. All of this attention has focused the light of deeper study on the Book of Revelation.

In the notes which I have made on this book, I have attempted to avoid the pitfall of presenting something new and novel just for the sake of being different. Likewise, I have steered clear of repeating threadbare cliches. Many works on Revelation are merely carbon copies of other works. In my own library I have more commentaries on the Revelation than on any other book of the Bible, and most of them are almost copies of those that have preceded them.

Another danger we need to avoid is that of thinking that the Book of Revelation can be put on a chart. Although I myself have a chart and have used it in teaching, I will not be using it in this study. The reason is that if it includes all it should, it is so complicated that nobody will understand it. On the other hand, if it is so brief that it can be understood, it doesn't give enough information. I have several charts sent to me by different men in whom I have great confidence. One of them is so complicated that I need a chart to understand his chart! So, although I won't be using a chart, I will use the brief sketch below to attempt to simplify the different stages of the Revelation and also give the overall picture.



Picture: The Different Stages Of The Revelation

As you can see, it begins with the cross of Christ and His ascension. In chapter 1, we see the glorified Christ. In chapters 2 -- 3 we see the church. In chapters 4 -- 5 we see that the church is in heaven. Then on earth the Great Tribulation takes place, chapters 6 -- 18. In chapter 19 we see that Christ returns to the earth and establishes His Kingdom, and chapter 20 gives us the thousand-year reign of Christ. Then the Great White Throne is set up, the place where the lost are judged, and in chapters 21 -- 22 eternity begins. That is the Book of Revelation.

Stauffer has made an important observation:

Domitian was also the first emperor to wage a proper campaign against Christ, and the church answered the attack under the leadership of Christ's last apostle, John of the Apocalypse. Nero had Paul and Peter destroyed, but he looked upon them as seditious Jews. Domitian was the first emperor to understand that behind the Christian movement there stood an enigmatic figure who threatened the glory of the emperors. He was the first to declare war on this figure, and the first also to lose the war -- a foretaste of things to come.

The subject of this book is very important to see. To emphasize and reemphasize it, let me direct your attention to chapter 1, [verse 1](#) -- "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (*italics mine*). Let's keep in mind that this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels you see Him in the days of His flesh, but they do not give the full revelation of Jesus Christ. There you see Him in humiliation. Here in Revelation you see Him in glory. You see Him in charge of everything that takes place. He is in full command. This is the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

Snell has put it so well that I would like to quote him:

In the Revelation the Lamb is the center around which all else is clustered, the foundation upon which everything lasting is built, the nail on which all hangs, the object to which all points, and the spring from which all blessing proceeds. The Lamb is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of heaven and earth, from whose face all defilement must flee away, and in whose presence fullness of joy is known. Hence we cannot go far in the study of the Revelation without seeing the Lamb. Like direction posts along the road to remind us that He, who did by Himself purge our sins, is now highly exalted and that to Him every knee must bow and every tongue confess.

To that grand statement I say hallelujah! For the Lamb is going to reign upon this earth. That is God's intention, and that is God's purpose.

As I have said, the Book of Revelation is not really a difficult book. It divides itself very easily. This is one book that doesn't require our labor in making divisions in it. John does it all for us according to the instructions given to him. In [verse 18](#) of the first chapter the Lord Jesus speaks as the glorified Christ: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Notice the four grand statements He makes concerning Himself: "I am alive. I was dead. I am alive for evermore. And I have the keys of hell [the grave] and of death." Then He tells John to write, and He gives him his outline in chapter 1, [verse 19](#): "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." My friend, this is a wonderful, grand division that He is giving. In fact, there is nothing quite like it.

He first says, "I am he that liveth." And He instructs John, "Write the things which thou hast seen." That is past tense, referring to the vision of the Son of Man in heaven, the glorified Christ in chapter 1.

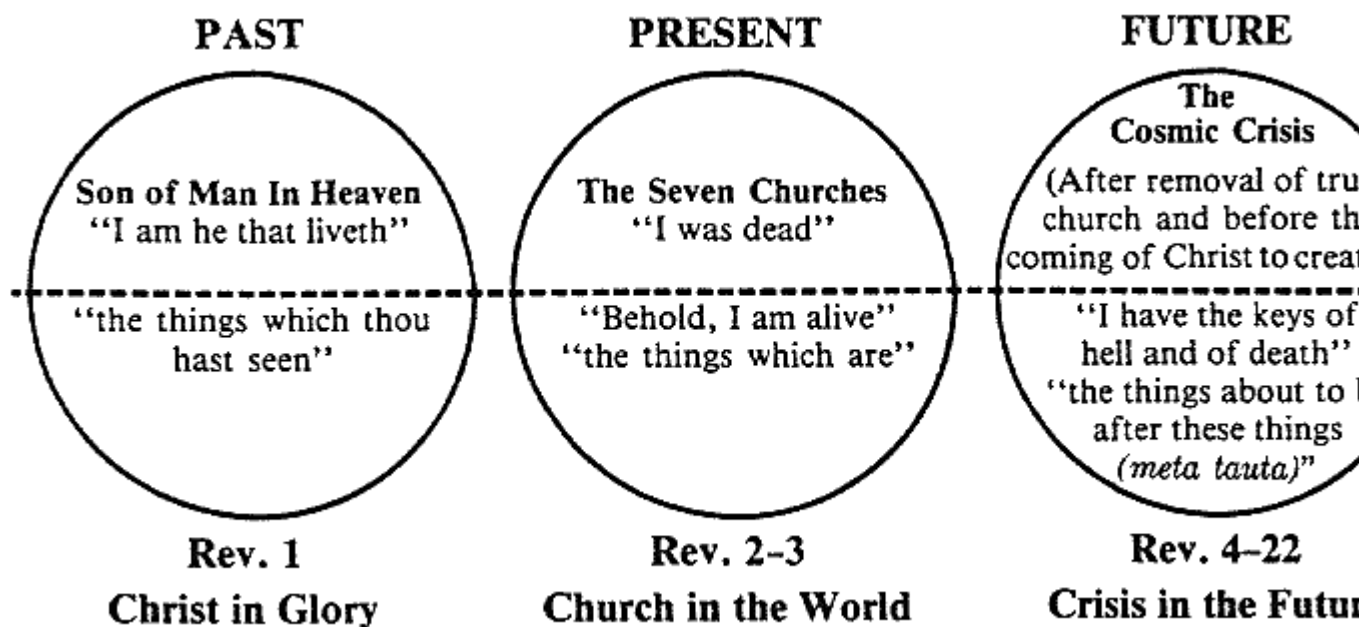
Then He says, "I was dead, and, behold, I am alive." And His instruction is, "Write the things which are." This is present tense, referring to Christ's present ministry. We are going to see that the living Christ is very busy doing things today. Do you realize that He is the Head of the church? Do you know the reason the contemporary church is in such a mess? The reason is that the church is like a body that has been decapitated. It is no longer in touch with the Head of the church. We will see Christ's ministry to the church in chapters 2 -- 3.

Thirdly, Christ said, "I have the keys of hell and of death." And when we get to chapter 5, we will see that no one could be found to open the book but one -- the Lord Jesus Christ.

So chapters 4 -- 22 deal with the future, and Christ said to John, "Write the things that you are about to see after these things." It is very important to see that "after these things" is the Greek *meta tauta*. After what things? After the church things. So in chapters 4 -- 22 he is dealing with things that are going to take place after the church leaves the earth. The fallacy of the hour is reaching into this third section and trying to pull those events up to the present. This gives rise to the wild and weird interpretations we hear in our day. Why don't we follow what John tells us? He gives us the past, present, and future of the Book of Revelation. He will let us know when he gets to the *meta tauta*, the "after these things." You can't miss it -- unless you follow a system of interpretation that doesn't fit into the Book of Revelation.

As you will see by the outline that follows, I have used the divisions which John has given to us:

- I. The Person of Jesus Christ -- Christ in glory, chapter 1.
- II. The Possession of Jesus Christ -- the church in the world is His, chapters 2 -- 3.
- III. The Program of Jesus Christ -- as seen in heaven, chapters 4 -- 22.



Picture: Chart Of The Past, Present, And Future Of The Book Of Revelation

The last section deals with the consummation of all things on this earth. This is what makes Revelation such a glorious and wonderful book.

In the first division of the Book of Revelation we will see the person of Christ in His position and glory as the Great High Priest who is in charge of His church. We will see that He is in absolute control. In the Gospels we find Him to be meek, lowly, and humble. He made Himself subject to His enemies on earth and died upon a cross! We find a completely different picture of Him in the Book of the Revelation. Here He is in absolute

control. Although He is still the Lamb of God, it is His wrath that is revealed, the wrath of the Lamb, and it terrifies the earth. When He speaks in wrath, His judgment begins upon the earth.

The person of Jesus Christ is the theme of this book. When the scene moves to heaven, we see Him there, too, controlling everything. Not only in Revelation but in the entire Bible Jesus Christ is the major theme. The Scriptures are both theocentric and Christocentric, God-centered and Christ-centered. Since Christ is God, He is the One who fills the horizon of the total Word of God. This needs to be kept in mind in a special way as we study the Book of Revelation -- even more than in the Gospels. The Bible as a whole tells us what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. The Book of Revelation emphasizes both what He is doing and what He will do.

The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, closes with the mention of the Son of Righteousness which is yet to rise. It holds out a hope for a cursed earth, and that hope is the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Revelation closes with the Bright and Morning Star, which is a figure of Christ at His coming to take the church out of the world. The Rapture is the hope of the New Testament, just as the revelation of Christ was the hope of the Old Testament. And the Book of Revelation will complete the revelation of Christ.

Notice also that there is a tie between Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible. Genesis presents the beginning, and Revelation presents the end. Note the contrasts between the two books:

In Genesis the earth was created; in Revelation the earth passes away.

In Genesis was Satan's first rebellion; in Revelation is Satan's last rebellion.

In Genesis the sun, moon, and stars were for earth's government; in Revelation these same heavenly bodies are for earth's judgment. In Genesis the sun was to govern the day; in Revelation there is no need of the sun.

In Genesis darkness was called night; in Revelation there is "no night there" (see [Rev. 21:25](#); [Rev. 22:5](#)).

In Genesis the waters were called seas; in Revelation there is no more sea.

In Genesis was the entrance of sin; in Revelation is the exodus of sin.

In Genesis the curse was pronounced; in Revelation the curse is removed.

In Genesis death entered; in Revelation there is no more death.

In Genesis was the beginning of sorrow and suffering; in Revelation there will be no more sorrow and no more tears.

In Genesis was the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation is the marriage of the Last Adam.

In Genesis we saw man's city, Babylon, being built; in Revelation we see man's city, Babylon, destroyed and God's city, the New Jerusalem, brought into view.

In Genesis Satan's doom was pronounced; in Revelation Satan's doom is executed.

It is interesting that Genesis opens the Bible not only with a global view but also with a universal view -- "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Gen. 1:1](#)). And the Bible closes with another global and universal book. The Revelation shows what God is going to do with His universe and with His creatures. There is no other book quite like this.

Outline

I. The Person of Jesus Christ -- Christ in Glory, [Rev. 1](#)

- A. Title of the Book, [Rev. 1:1](#)
- B. Method of Revelation, [Rev. 1:2](#)
- C. Beatitude of Bible Study, [Rev. 1:3](#)
- D. Greetings from John the Writer and from Jesus Christ in Heaven, [Rev. 1:4-8](#)
- E. The Post-Incarnate Christ in a Glorified Body, Judging His Church (the Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies), [Rev. 1:9-18](#) "we know him no longer after the flesh"
- F. Time Division of the Contents of Apocalypse, [Rev. 1:19](#)
- G. Interpretation of the Seven Stars and Seven Lampstands, [Rev. 1:20](#)

II. The Possession of Jesus Christ -- The Church in the World, [Rev. 2](#) through [Rev. 3](#)

- A. Letter of Christ to the Church in Ephesus, [Rev. 2:1-7](#)
- B. Letter of Christ to the Church in Smyrna, [Rev. 2:8-11](#)
- C. Letter of Christ to the Church in Pergamum, [Rev. 2:12-17](#)
- D. Letter of Christ to the Church in Thyatira, [Rev. 2:18-29](#)
- E. Letter of Christ to the Church in Sardis, [Rev. 3:1-6](#)
- F. Letter of Christ to the Church in Philadelphia, [Rev. 3:7-13](#)
- G. Letter of Christ to the Church in Laodicea, [Rev. 3:14-22](#)

III. The Program of Jesus Christ -- The Scene in Heaven, [Rev. 4](#) through [Rev. 22](#)

- A. The Church in Heaven with Christ, [Rev. 4](#) through [Rev. 5](#)
"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also"
 - 1. Throne of God, [Rev. 4:1-3](#)
 - 2. Twenty-four Elders, [Rev. 4:4-5](#)
 - 3. Four Living Creatures, [Rev. 4:6-11](#)
 - 4. Book with Seven Seals, [Rev. 5:1-4](#)
 - 5. Christ: the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lamb Which Has Been Slain, [Rev. 5:5-10](#)
 - 6. Myriads of Angels of Heaven Join the Song of Praise and Redemption, [Rev. 5:11-12](#)
 - 7. Universal Worship of the Savior and Sovereign of the Universe, [Rev. 5:13-14](#)
- B. The Great Tribulation in the World, [Rev. 6](#) through [Rev. 18](#)

1. Opening of the Seven-Sealed Book, [Rev. 6](#) through [Rev. 8:1](#)
 - a. Opening of the First Seal, [Rev. 6:1-2](#)
(Rider on a White Horse)
 - b. Opening of the Second Seal, [Rev. 6:3-4](#)
(Rider on a Red Horse)
 - c. Opening of the Third Seal, [Rev. 6:5-6](#)
(Rider on a Black Horse)
 - d. Opening of the Fourth Seal, [Rev. 6:7-8](#)
(Rider on a Pale Horse)
 - e. Opening of the Fifth Seal, [Rev. 6:9-11](#)
(Prayer of the Martyred Remnant)
 - f. Opening of the Sixth Seal, [Rev. 6:12-17](#)
(The Day of Wrath Has Come -- Beginning the Last Half of the Great Tribulation)
 - g. Interlude, [Rev. 7](#)
 - (1) Reason for the Interlude between the 6th and 7th Seals, [Rev. 7:1-3](#)
 - (2) Remnant of Israel Sealed, [Rev. 7:4-8](#)
 - (3) Redeemed Multitude of Gentiles, [Rev. 7:9-17](#)
 - h. Opening of the Seventh Seal -- Introduction of Seven Trumpets, [Rev. 8:1](#)
2. Blowing of the Seven Trumpets, [Rev. 8:2](#) -- [Rev. 11:19](#)
 - a. Angel at the Altar with Censer of Incense, [Rev. 8:2-6](#)
 - b. First Trumpet -- Trees Burnt, [Rev. 8:7](#)
 - c. Second Trumpet -- Seas Become Blood, [Rev. 8:8-9](#)
 - d. Third Trumpet -- Fresh Water Becomes Bitter, [Rev. 8:10-11](#)
 - e. Fourth Trumpet -- Sun, Moon, Stars Smitten, [Rev. 8:12-13](#)
 - f. Fifth Trumpet -- Fallen Star and Plague of Locusts, [Rev. 9:1-12](#)
 - g. Sixth Trumpet -- Angels Loosed at River Euphrates, [Rev. 9:13-21](#)
 - h. Interlude between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets, [Rev. 10:1](#) through [Rev. 11:14](#)
 - (1) The Strong Angel with the Little Book, [Rev. 10:1-7](#)
 - (2) John Eats the Little Book, [Rev. 10:8-11](#)
 - (3) Date for the Ending of "The Times of the Gentiles," [Rev. 11:1-2](#)
 - (4) Duration of the Prophesying of the Two Witnesses, [Rev. 11:3-12](#)
 - (5) Doom of the Second Woe -- Great Earthquake, [Rev. 11:13-14](#)
 - i. Seventh Trumpet -- End of Great Tribulation and Opening of Temple in Heaven, [Rev. 11:15-19](#)
3. Seven Performers During the Great Tribulation, [Rev. 12](#) through [Rev. 13](#)
 - a. The Woman -- Israel, [Rev. 12:1-2](#)
 - b. The Red Dragon -- Satan, [Rev. 12:3-4](#)
 - c. The Child of the Woman -- Jesus Christ, [Rev. 12:5-6](#)
 - d. Michael, the Archangel, Wars with the Dragon, [Rev. 12:7-12](#)
 - e. The Dragon Persecutes the Woman, [Rev. 12:13-16](#)
 - f. Remnant of Israel, [Rev. 12:17](#)

- g. Wild Beast Out of the Sea -- a Political Power and a Person, [Rev. 13:1-10](#)
 - (1) Wild Beast, Description, [Rev. 13:1-2](#)
 - (2) Wild Beast, Death-Dealing Stroke, [Rev. 13:3](#)
 - (3) Wild Beast, Deity Assumed, [Rev. 13:4-5](#)
 - (4) Wild Beast, Defying God, [Rev. 13:6-8](#)
 - (5) Wild Beast, Defiance Denied to Anyone, [Rev. 13:9-10](#)
 - h. Wild Beast Out of the Earth -- a Religious Leader, [Rev. 13:11-18](#)
 - (1) Wild Beast, Description, [Rev. 13:11](#)
 - (2) Wild Beast, Delegated Authority, [Rev. 13:12-14](#)
 - (3) Wild Beast, Delusion Perpetrated on the World, [Rev. 13:15-17](#)
 - (4) Wild Beast, Designation, [Rev. 13:18](#)
4. Looking to the End of the Great Tribulation, [Rev. 14](#)
- a. Picture of the Lamb with the 144,000, [Rev. 14:1-5](#)
 - b. Proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel, [Rev. 14:6-7](#)
 - c. Pronouncement of Judgment on Babylon, [Rev. 14:8](#)
 - d. Pronouncement of Judgment on Those Who Received the Mark of the Beast, [Rev. 14:9-12](#)
 - e. Praise for Those Who Die in the Lord, [Rev. 14:13](#)
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5. Pouring Out of the Seven Mixing Bowls of Wrath, [Rev. 15](#) through [Rev. 16](#)
- a. Preparation for Final Judgment of the Great Tribulation, [Rev. 15:1](#) through [Rev. 16:1](#)
 - (1) Tribulation Saints in Heaven Worship God Because He Is Holy and Just, [Rev. 15:1-4](#)
 - (2) Temple of the Tabernacle Opened in Heaven that Seven Angels, Having Seven Golden Bowls, Might Proceed Forth, [Rev. 15:5](#) through [Rev. 16:1](#)
 - b. Pouring Out of the First Bowl, [Rev. 16:](#)
 - c. Pouring Out of the Second Bowl, [Rev. 16:3](#)
 - d. Pouring Out of the Third Bowl, [Rev. 16:4-7](#)
 - e. Pouring Out of the Fourth Bowl, [Rev. 16:8-9](#)
 - f. Pouring Out of the Fifth Bowl, [Rev. 16:10-11](#)
 - g. Pouring Out of the Sixth Bowl, [Rev. 16:12](#)
 - h. Interlude: Kings of Inhabited Earth Proceed to Har-Mageddon, [Rev. 16:13-16](#)
 - i. Pouring Out of the Seventh Bowl, [Rev. 16:17-21](#)
6. The Two Babylons Judged, [Rev. 17](#) through [Rev. 18](#)
- a. The Apostate Church in the Great Tribulation, [Rev. 17](#)
 - (1) Great Harlot Riding the Wild Beast, [Rev. 17:1-7](#)
 - (2) Wild Beast Destroys the Great Harlot, [Rev. 17:8-18](#)
 - b. Political and Commercial Babylon Judged, [Rev. 18](#)
 - (1) Announcement of Fall of Commercial and Political Babylon, [Rev. 18:1-8](#)

- (2) Anguish in the World Because of Judgment on Babylon, [Rev. 18:9-19](#)
- (3) Anticipation of Joy in Heaven Because of Judgment on Babylon, [Rev. 18:20-24](#)

C. Marriage of the Lamb and Return of Christ in Judgment, [Rev. 19](#)

- 1. Four Hallelujahs, [Rev. 19:1-6](#)
- 2. Bride of the Lamb and Marriage Supper, [Rev. 19:7-10](#)
- 3. Return of Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, [Rev. 19:11-16](#)
- 4. Battle of Armageddon, [Rev. 19:17-18](#)
- 5. Hell Opened, [Rev. 19:19-21](#)

D. Millennium, [Rev. 20](#)

- 1. Satan Bound 1000 Years, [Rev. 20:1-3](#)
- 2. Saints of the Great Tribulation Reign with Christ 1000 Years, [Rev. 20:4-6](#)
- 3. Satan Loosed After 1000 Years, [Rev. 20:7-9](#)
- 4. Satan Cast into Lake of Fire and Brimstone, [Rev. 20:10](#)
- 5. Setting of Great White Throne Where Lost Are Judged and Follow Satan into Lake of Fire and Brimstone, [Rev. 20:11-15](#)

E. Entrance Into Eternity; Eternity Unveiled, [Rev. 21](#) through [Rev. 22](#)

- 1. New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem, [Rev. 21:1-2](#)
- 2. New Era, [Rev. 21:3-8](#)
- 3. New Jerusalem, Description of the Eternal Abode of the Bride, [Rev. 21:9-21](#)
- 4. New Relationship -- God Dwelling with Man, [Rev. 21:22-23](#)
- 5. New Center of the New Creation, [Rev. 21:24-27](#)
- 6. River of Water of Life and Tree of Life, [Rev. 22:1-5](#)
- 7. Promise of Return of Christ, [Rev. 22:6-16](#)
- 8. Final Invitation and Warning, [Rev. 22:17-19](#)
- 9. Final Promise and Prayer, [Rev. 22:20-21](#)

Chapter 1

THEME: The person of Jesus Christ

In the first division of this book we see the person of Christ. We see Christ in His glory and position as the Great High Priest who is in charge of His church. We see Him in absolute control. In the Gospels we find Him meek, lowly, humble, and dying upon a cross. He made Himself subject to His enemies on earth. He is not like that in the Book of Revelation. He is in control. He is still the Lamb of God, but we see the wrath of the Lamb that terrifies the earth.

The major theme of the entire Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are both theocentric and Christocentric. Since Christ is God, He is the One who fills the horizon of the total Word of God. This needs to be kept in mind in the Book of Revelation more than in any other book of the Bible, even more than in the Gospels. The Bible tells what

He has done, is doing, and will do. Revelation emphasizes what He is doing and what He will do. We need to keep that in mind.

The Title Of The Book (1:1)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John [[Rev. 1:1](#)].

In my book *Reveling Through Revelation* I have included my own literal translation of each verse of the Book of Revelation, and in this book I will use some of it also. I don't use it because it is better. For many years I have called my translation the McGee-icus Ad Absurdum translation. I would not defend it if anyone made an attack upon it. It is merely an attempt to lift out of the Greek what John is actually saying and to try to couch it in language that may be a little more literal and understandable to us in our day. It will appear in italicized type after the King James version:

The unveiling of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show unto His bond servants things which must shortly come to pass completely, and He sent and signified it (gave a sign) by His angel (messenger) to His servant John.

First of all, please note that the title of this book is Revelation -- singular, not plural. A retired preacher came to me when I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles to make an attack upon my interpretation of the Book of Revelation. He said, "You just don't know anything about Revelations," using the plural. I replied, "Brother, you are absolutely accurate in that I know nothing about the Book of Revelations. I have never even seen that book." He was astounded and later embarrassed by his own ignorance when he realized that the Book of Revelation is the Revelation. It is the apokalupsis, that is, "the uncovering, unveiling, or revelation" of Jesus Christ.

"To shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." In the last chapter of Revelation, John is instructed, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" ([Rev. 22:10](#)). It is not a sealed book; it is open and to be understood in our day. This is in contrast to the prophecy in the Book of Daniel which Daniel was instructed to seal. Our Lord Jesus gave what are known as the "mystery" parables. Very frankly, to the majority of the church today they are still a mystery. But our Lord put it like this: "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" ([Mark 4:11-12](#)). You see, my friend, in the Gospels we have only the half-story. We need the Book of Revelation because it is the consummation of it. Of course, it can be understood only if the Spirit of God is our teacher. But the Book of Revelation takes off the veil so we can see Christ in His unveiled beauty and power and glory. This book is the opposite of a secret or a mystery. It is a disclosure of secrets, and it is called prophecy in the next verse, as we shall see.

When a so-called Christian says that he does not understand the Book of Revelation, it makes me wonder, because this book was given to us in order that we might understand these mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

"To show" means by word pictures, by symbols, by direct and indirect representations.

"And he sent and signified it." That is, he used symbols. And keep in mind that the symbols are symbolic of reality. Peter gave us a great rule for the interpretation of prophecy in [2Peter 1:20](#): "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." You don't interpret a single text by itself; you interpret it in the light of the entire Word of God. Ottman said, "The figurative language of Revelation is figurative of facts."

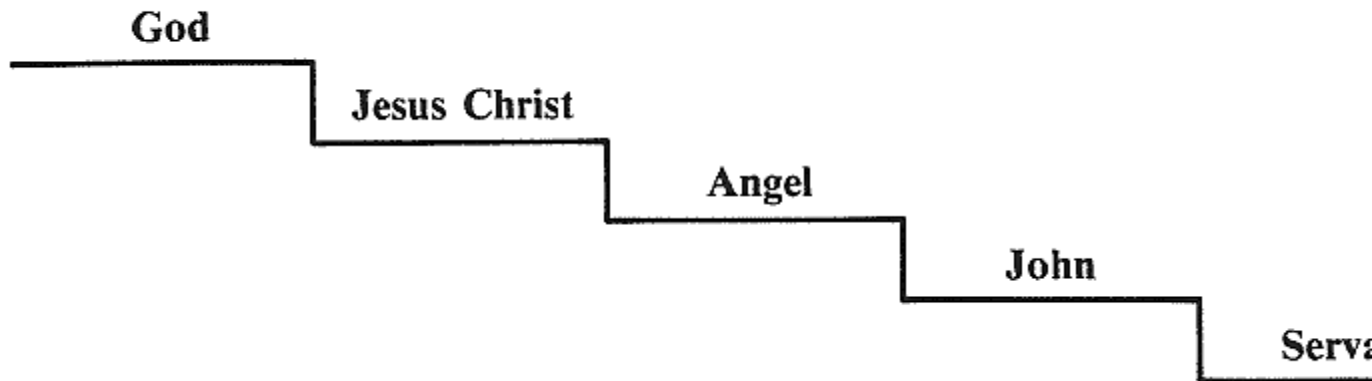
"To shew . . . things" assures us that what John tells us is not ethereal and ephemeral dream stuff. There is a hard core of real facts in this book. What are "things"? One night Mrs. McGee and I took care of our little grandson. We let him play in the den where we keep a bunch of toys for him to play with when he stays with us. He went into the den and got out all of those things. In fact, he calls them his things. He spread them all over the floor of the den. We indulge the little fellow, and we didn't make him pick up all of his toys after he was through playing. We didn't pick them up either. So later that night, when I walked through the den, I stepped on some of his things. In fact, I stumbled over them and took a tumble. You can say that "things" are symbols, but you don't take a tumble over symbols. And in the Book of Revelation, the "things" are made out of hard stuff. These "things" are reality. Any time John uses a symbol, he will make it clear to us that he is using a symbol. And we can be sure that he is using a symbol because the reality is far greater than the symbol. In fact, the symbol is a poor representation of the reality.

"Must" -- He says that they must shortly come to pass. The word must has in it an urgent necessity and an absolute certainty.

"Shortly" has a connotation that is very important for us to note. The word occurs quite a few times in the Scriptures. For instance, we have it in [Luke 18:8](#) where our Lord says, "I tell you that he will avenge them [His elect] speedily. . . ." The word speedily is the same word as shortly. It means that when the vengeance begins, it will take place in a hurry. There will be no waiting around for it. That implies that the Lord is not coming soon, but that when He does return, the things He is talking about will happen shortly and with great speed. His vengeance will take place in a brief period of time.

John tells us that it is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him. Notice the steps of revelation:

THE STEPS OF REVELATION



Picture: The Steps Of Revelation

It originated with God, it was given to Jesus Christ, He gave it to His angel, His angel gave it to John, and from John it goes to His servants that they might know what is coming to pass. And that is the way it has come to you and me today.

By the way, this raises a question that I sometimes hear. Someone says, "Well, preacher, you painted yourself into a corner, because you said that angels are not connected with the church age." Yes, and I still say that. The angel mentioned here is a heavenly messenger, but notice that John is writing primarily about future things; that is, what Jesus is going to do in the future. And beginning with chapter 4, everything is future and will take place after the church has left the earth. Therefore, we see angels coming back into prominence. This is true to the way the book moves.

The Method Of Revelation (1:2)

Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw [\[Rev. 1:2\]](#).

Who bore witness of the Word of God, and of the testimony (witness) of Jesus Christ, even as many things as he saw.

"Who bare record" or, as I have translated it, "who bore witness" is in the Greek an epistolary aorist. It means that John projects himself up to where his readers are, where you and I are in this day, and he looks back at what he is writing.

"Of the word of God." The "word of God" refers, I believe, to both Christ and the contents of this book. He is the living Word, and when the written Word reveals Him to us, He is the living Word, you may be sure of that.

"And of the testimony [witness] of Jesus Christ." I prefer the word witness rather than testimony. It occurs ninety times in the writings of John -- fifty times in his Gospel record.

"And of all things that he saw." He was an eyewitness of the visions. What John saw, he made pictures of, and the Book of Revelation is television, friend. It was the first television program ever presented, and it is one you would do well to watch. It came from

heaven from God the Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, and it was given to an angel who gave it to John, who wrote about what he saw. Not only did John hear, he also saw, and these are the two avenues through which we get most of our information. I sometimes wonder if John didn't smell things just a little bit, too, because there are parts of this book where you catch the odor also.

The Beatitude Of Bible Study (1:3)

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand [[Rev. 1:3](#)].

This verse gives us the beatitude of Bible study. This is the first of seven beatitudes found in the Book of Revelation. This verse says, "Blessed is he that readeth," and that means the reader, or in the church, the teacher. Both those who read this book and those who hear it will be blessed. And both the reader and the hearer are to keep those things which are written in the book. The threefold blessing comes from reading, hearing, and keeping. I believe those who go through the Book of Revelation will receive a special blessing. I really believe it because that is what John says.

"For the time is at hand" does not mean that the things which are mentioned at the end of the book are happening in our day, but it does mean that the beginning of the church on the Day of Pentecost began this movement of the Lord Jesus' ministry in heaven. We are going to see a vision of Him in this chapter, a vision of the glorified Christ. Then we will see what His ministry is, and that will move us right on into the future.

Greetings From John, The Writer, And From Christ In Heaven (1:4-8)

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne [[Rev. 1:4](#)].

This is a very wonderful greeting! "John to the seven churches which are in Asia." "Asia" encompassed a great deal of what we generally call Asia Minor or modern Turkey. Notice that John connects no title with his name. I have a notion that John was well known in these seven churches. We know that he had been pastor of the church at Ephesus, and apparently he had oversight of all the churches in that area.

Before we go further, let me call your attention to the number seven. In this verse there is the mention of seven churches and seven Spirits. The number seven has a religious meaning in the Word of God, which was apparent to the people in John's day but is totally foreign to us in our day. The gambling sector of our society is very conscious of numbers, as are folk who are superstitious, but we are not accustomed to attaching any religious significance to numbers. However, in the Word of God the number seven is prominent. It does not denote perfection, but it does denote completeness. Sometimes completeness is perfection, but not always.

Seven speaks of that which is complete and that which is representative. In a particular way, seven has to do with God's covenant and dealings with Israel. For instance, the

Sabbath, circumcision, and worship are all hinged around the seventh day. As you go through the Word of God, you notice that Jericho was compassed about seven times. Naaman was instructed to dip in the Jordan River seven times, there were seven years of plenty and seven years of famine in Joseph's time in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar was insane for seven years, there are seven beatitudes in the New Testament, there are seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, there are seven parables in [Matthew 13](#), seven loaves fed the multitude, Jesus spoke seven times from the cross, and in the Book of Revelation the number seven cannot be ignored or considered accidental. Seven is the key number of this book.

Here in the fourth verse, John writes to the "seven churches." Weren't there other churches in Asia? We know there were churches at Colosse, Miletus, Hierapolis, Troas, and at many other places. I have stayed at Hierapolis. It is still a place, and it is about ten miles from Laodicea, which is now in ruins. There are three motels at Laodicea and a store or two. The ruins of Hierapolis are absolutely magnificent and quite significant, because they reveal what a tremendous place it was at one time. In contrast, the ruins of Laodicea are, for the most part, under a wild oat field. They have not been excavated. John was directed to write to seven churches, and Hierapolis was not one of the seven, although it was an important center of Christian influence and the ruins of four early Christian churches have been found there. John was directed to write to only seven certain churches because he was giving the complete history of the church and they were representative churches, as we shall see.

"Asia" refers to the provinces which include Lydia, Mysia, Caria, and parts of Phrygia. It does not mean the continent of Asia nor does it include all of Asia Minor (Asia Minor is a term which was not used until the fourth century B.C.), but it covers a great area of Asia Minor, especially along the coast.

"Grace be unto you, and peace." The word grace is *charis*, the Greek form of greeting, and peace is *shalom*, the Hebrew form of greeting. Peace flows from grace, and grace is the source of all our blessings today. The Book of Revelation reveals the grace of God and also peace. We don't need to be frightened as we study this book; we can have the peace of God in our hearts.

It is "from him . . . and from the seven Spirits," which brings the Trinity before us. The "seven Spirits" refer to the Holy Spirit and probably have reference to the seven branches of the lampstand, as we shall see later on.

"Which is, and which was, and which is to come" emphasizes the eternity and immutability of God. Notice now the mention of each member of the Trinity: "Jesus Christ" (in the next verse) refers to God the Son, the "seven Spirits" refer to the Holy Spirit, and "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" refers to God the Father.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first
begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto
him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to
him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen [[Rev. 1:5-6](#)].

In these two verses we have the titles which are given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the interesting thing is that there are seven titles:

1. "Faithful witness" -- Jesus Christ is the only trustworthy witness to the facts of this book. The facts are about Him. He testifies of Himself. It is difficult to believe other people, but we can believe the Lord Jesus.
2. "First begotten of the dead" is firstborn from the dead. Firstborn is the Greek *prototokos*, which has to do with resurrection. He is the first to rise from the dead, never to die again. This is a marvelous picture! Death was a womb which bore Him. He came out of death into life. The tomb was a womb, as far as He was concerned. He is the only One back from the dead in a glorified body. No one else has come that route yet, but His own are going to follow Him in resurrection, and the Rapture will be next (see [1Thess. 4:14](#)). Then will come the revelation when He will come to the earth.
3. "The prince [ruler] of the kings of the earth" speaks of His ultimate position during the Millennium. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil. 2:9-11](#)).
4. "Unto him that loved us" is actually in the present tense and emphasizes His constant attitude toward His own. The Book of Revelation should not frighten us too much because of the fact that it is from the One who loves us. Jesus Christ didn't love us only when He died on the cross, although He loved us at that time, but He also loves us today. Right at this very minute, Jesus loves you.
5. "Washed [loosed] us from our sins in his own blood." The blood of Christ is very important. It is not just a symbol. In the Old Testament, God taught His people that the ". . . life of the flesh is in the blood . . ." ([Lev. 17:11](#)). In this verse God goes on to say, "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. . . ." When Christ shed His blood, I think every drop came out of His body. He gave that for you and for me. He gave His life, if you please. He died, and I am not inclined to belittle the blood of Christ as some men are doing today. I still like the song with these words:

There is a fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel's veins; And
sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains. "There Is
a Fountain" "There Is a Fountain" -- William Cowper

Peter wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" ([1Pet. 1:18-19](#)). Because of that shed blood, Paul could write to the young preacher Timothy, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" ([1Tim. 2:5](#)). He loosed us from our sins in His own blood. What a wonderful, glorious thing!

6. "And hath made us kings and priests [a kingdom of priests] unto God and his Father" -- believers are never called kings. They are a kingdom of priests and are going to rule with the Lord Jesus. Quite frankly, I don't get wrought up over the popular song, "The King Is

Coming." The King is coming, all right, but when He comes as King, He will come to the earth, and at that time He is going to put down all unrighteousness. But before He comes to earth as King, He will come in the air, an event we call the Rapture. At that time He will come as my Savior. He comes as the Bridegroom for His bride, the church, whom He loves and gave Himself for. He comes as the lover of my soul. For this reason I am not thrilled with "The King Is Coming." My relationship to Him is much closer. He is my Lord. He has not made us "kings and priests," He has made us a kingdom of priests, and we are going to reign with Him.

It is interesting to note that it reads, "unto God and his Father." Why doesn't it read, "unto God and our Father"? Because He is the Father of Jesus in a sense that He is not our Father. You see, we become sons of God through regeneration, being born from above, by accepting Him as Savior. But Christ's eternal position in the Trinity is that of the Son.

7. "To Him the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages" (my own translation). This is emphasizing eternity. "Amen." Christ is the amen, as we saw in Isaiah. That is a title for Him. Jesus Christ is both the subject and the object of this book. He is the mover of all events, and all events move toward Him. He is the far-off eternal purpose in everything. All things were not only made by Him, but all things were made for Him. This universe exists for Him.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen [[Rev. 1:7](#)].

"Behold, he cometh with clouds" denotes the personal and physical coming of Christ.

"And every eye shall see him" reveals that His coming will be a physical and bodily appearance, an appeal to the eye-gate. As far as we know, when Christ takes the church out of the world at the Rapture, He doesn't appear to everyone. I don't believe in a secret rapture as some folk have attempted to describe it, but at the time of the Rapture He does not come to the earth. Believers are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. If Christ will be coming to the earth at that time, there is no point in being caught up in the air. Therefore, this is not the Rapture which is being described in this verse. This is His return to the earth as King.

"Every eye shall see him." The emphasis in the Book of Revelation is upon His coming to this earth to establish His Kingdom.

"All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Probably a better translation is this: "All the tribes of the earth shall beat their breasts because of him." This is going to be the reaction of all Christ-rejectors. The world will not want to see Him.

"Even so, Amen" means "Yea, faithful." He is going to do it, my friend. He is not going to change His mind about it. He is faithful.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty [[Rev. 1:8](#)].

"I am Alpha and Omega." This is quite a remarkable statement in the Greek language. The alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. From an alphabet you make words, and Jesus Christ is called the "Word of God" -- the full revelation and intelligent communication of God. He is the only alphabet you can use to reach God, my friend. The only language God speaks and understands is the language where Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega and all the letters in between. He is the "A" and the "Z," and He is the "ABC." If you are going to get through to God the Father, you will have to go through the Son, Jesus Christ. Here the emphasis is upon the beginning and the end. Here in the original Greek the Omega is not spelled out as is the Alpha. Why? Because Christ is the beginning, and the beginning is already completed. But the end is yet to be; so He didn't spell out the Omega in this instance. One day He will complete God's program. This is a very interesting detail in the Greek text.

"The beginning and the ending" refers to the eternity of the Son and His immutability. Concerning this, [Hebrews 13:8](#) says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." When it says that He is the same, it does not mean that He is walking over yonder by the Sea of Galilee today. He is not. But it means that in His attributes He is the same. He has not changed. He is immutable. Since He is the beginning and the ending, He encompasses all time and eternity.

"Saith the Lord" is an affirmation of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Which is," that is, at the present time, He is the glorified Christ.

"Which was" -- past time, the first coming of Christ as Savior.

"Which is to come" -- future time, the second coming of Christ as the Sovereign over this earth.

[Verses 4-8](#) have comprised this very remarkable section of greetings from John, the writer, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that He says He loves us; so let's not be afraid of anything that is to follow.

The Post-incarnate Christ In A Glorified Body Judging His Church (1:9-18)

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ [[Rev. 1:9](#)].

I, John, who am your brother, and partaker with you in the persecution (for Christ's sake), and kingdom and patience in Jesus; I was (found myself) in the isle called Patmos because of [Gr.: dia, on account of] the Word of God and the witness of Jesus.

"I John" is used three times in this Book of Revelation -- the other two are at the end of the book.

"Your brother, and companion in tribulation" does not refer to the Great Tribulation. John was in trouble. Domitian (B.C. 96), the Roman emperor, had put him in prison on the Isle of Patmos. John had been active in the church at Ephesus, and he had supervision over all the other churches, and he had been teaching the Word of God. You get into trouble when

you teach all of the Word of God. John knew all about trouble, and so did the early church. So if it comes to you and me, it is nothing new at all.

Again let me say that John is not referring to the Great Tribulation but to the persecution that was already befalling believers. And "the kingdom" refers to the present state of the kingdom. By virtue of the new birth, which places a sinner in Christ, he is likewise in the kingdom of God. This is not the millennial kingdom -- that has not been established yet. Christ will institute it at His coming.

Someone has said that we are living today in the kingdom and patience -- patience is where the emphasis is.

John explains the reason he was on the Isle of Patmos. He was exiled there from about B.C. 86 to 96. It is a rugged, volcanic island off the coast of Asia Minor. It is about ten miles long and six miles wide.

"Jesus," you will notice, is the name used by John in both his Gospel and in the Apocalypse. When he wants to bring glory to Him, he calls Him Jesus, and then he lifts Him to the skies. I hope that we can do that, also.

Before we look at the next verses, let me remind you that John was given this great vision on the lonely Isle of Patmos. It is a vision of the post-incarnate Christ in His glorified body as He is judging His church. In other words, we shall see the Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea [[Rev. 1:10-11](#)].

I was (found myself) in (the) Spirit in the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great sound, as of a (war) trumpet, saying, What you are seeing, write (promptly) into a book, and send (promptly) to the seven churches, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

My own transition is not a finished translation by any means, and I do not recommend it, but it is an attempt to get from the original Greek what is actually being said.

The Holy Spirit is here performing His office work. That is why I pray that the Spirit of God might take the things of Christ and show them unto us. That is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ said the Holy Spirit would do when He came. The Lord's exact words were, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" ([John 16:13-14](#)).

We are beginning to get a vision of the glorified Christ. We are considering Him in His office as the Great High Priest today.

I fully recognize that in myself I am totally incompetent to try to explain these tremendous verses. Only the Spirit of God can make them real to us. However, [Hebrews 3:1](#) tells us, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." So we are considering Him in His present office of Great High Priest.

"I was in the Spirit," John says. The Holy Spirit was moving upon John and giving him a panoramic picture. This is cinerama. It is sight and sound. It is an appeal to both the eye-gate and the ear-gate.

"On the Lord's day." The meaning of this is controversial. Some outstanding scholars interpret this as being a reference to the Day of the Lord. While I certainly respect them and their viewpoint, I cannot accept this view, although the great theme of Revelation will deal with the Day of the Lord, which is the Tribulation period and the millennial kingdom. But John says that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and, in my judgment, the Day of the Lord and the Lord's Day are two different things. We recognize that anti-fat and fat auntie are two different things and that a chestnut horse and a horse chestnut are two different things. And I would say that the Day of the Lord and the Lord's Day are two different things also, and that the Lord's Day refers to what we call Sunday.

"I . . . heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." Who was it? He will tell us --

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle [[Rev. 1:12-13](#)].

And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me, and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like to a Son of Man, clothed with a garment, reaching to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle.

John heard a voice like a war trumpet, and it spoke to him. When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven to remove His church from the earth, He will come with a shout.

[1Thessalonians 4:16](#) tells us about it: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." His voice will be like the voice of an archangel, and His voice will be like a trumpet, because it is identified here as just that. But it will be Christ's own voice. He is not going to need any archangel to help Him raise His own from the dead.

What a thrill it is to see this picture of the Lord Jesus Christ! It is a vision of One like the Son of Man. He is "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle." The seven golden lampstands remind us of the tabernacle. There it was one lampstand with seven branches. Here it is seven separate lampstands. Since these lampstands represent seven separate churches ([v. 20](#)), the difference is explained. The

function of all is the same. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, and when I leave, you are to be the light in the world" (see [John 8:12](#)).

We see the Lord Jesus Christ pictured here as our Great High Priest. His garments are those of the high priest -- check [Exodus 28:2-4](#). The garments represent the inherent righteousness of Christ. In Him is no sin, and He knew no sin.

Concerning the girdle, Josephus states that the priests were girded about the breasts. The ordinary custom was to be girded about the loins. But the emphasis here is not on service but on strength. It speaks of His judgment in truth.

We are asked to consider our Great High Priest as He stands in the midst of the churches. He is judging the churches; He is judging believers that the light might continue to shine. My friend, it is important to see what Christ's present ministry is.

This is a subject about which I have wanted to write. I haven't gotten around to it yet and may never write it, but I have a title for it: The Contemporary Christ. I hear so many foolish things that are being said about what Jesus is doing in our day. My friend, the Scripture does not leave us in the dark regarding what He is doing today. It mentions three very definite ministries.

First, there is the intercession of Christ. He is our Great High Priest. He is standing at the golden altar in heaven today, where He ever lives to make intercession for us (see [Heb. 7:25](#)). We love that part of His ministry. It is a wonderful thing.

Secondly, we have the intervention of Christ. He steps outside of the Holy Place to the laver. There He washes the feet of those who are His own. He washes those who have confessed their sins. Christians have sin, and those sins must be confessed in order to have fellowship with Him. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1John 1:9](#)). He is girded today with the towel, and He carries the basin; He intervenes on our behalf.

John also says in his first epistle: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." He has made every provision that we sin not. I don't know about you, but I haven't reached that state yet. And, frankly, I have never met anyone who has. But John says, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father . . ." ([1John 2:1](#)). Christ is our advocate. That is, He is on our side defending us when we are accused, and Satan is the accuser of the brethren.

There is yet another ministry of Christ that is not very popular. It is the ministry mentioned in the first chapter of Revelation, and I think that is one reason this section of Revelation is so little known. Here we see His ministry of inspection. What Christ is doing today is clearly outlined in the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, but He did not start twiddling His thumbs. When we are told that He "sat down," it means that He finished His work of redemption for man. He died on earth to save us, and He lives in heaven to keep us saved. I think He is busier today trying to keep us saved than He was when He was on earth.

We have the three ministries of Christ; we have His intercession, His intervention, and His inspection. The inspection of Christ is what we are going to look at now. Where is He

now? We see Him walking in the midst of the lampstands. In the Book of Exodus we see the golden lampstand. It was the most beautiful article of furniture in the tabernacle. It was made of solid gold, and there were three branches on each side of the main stem. The top of each stem was fashioned like an open almond blossom, and the lamps were set there. The lamps represent the Holy Spirit; the golden lampstand itself represents Christ - His glory and His deity. Christ sent the Holy Spirit into the world. The golden lampstand holds up the lamps, and the lamps, in turn, reveal the beauty and glory of the lampstand. That is the picture we have in Revelation. I trust that even now the Holy Spirit will make Christ, in all of His glory, wonder, and beauty, real to you that you may see yourself in the light of His presence as He inspects you. That is not a popular teaching today. We don't like to be inspected, but in Revelation we see Him walking in the midst of the lampstands, performing His ministry of inspection.

In the tabernacle the high priest had the sole oversight of the lampstand. The other priests had other duties to perform, but the high priest took care of the lampstand. He was the one who lighted the lamps. He poured in the oil and trimmed the wicks. If one of the lamps began to smoke and did not give a good clear light, he was the one who snuffed it out. The Lord Jesus is walking in the midst of the lampstands today. He is in the midst of His church, made up of individual believers. He is doing several things: He trims the wicks. In [John 15](#) we are told that He prunes the branches of believers so that they might bring forth fruit. One of the reasons He lets us go through certain trials on earth is so that He might get some fruit off our branches or that He might make our light burn more brightly. He is the One who pours in the oil, which represents the Holy Spirit. I get so tired today of hearing people say, "The Holy Ghost this, and the Holy Ghost that." My friend, Jesus Christ is the Head of the church. He is the One who sent the Holy Spirit into the world. He said that when the Holy Spirit came He would do certain things, not just any old thing you want Him to do. The Holy Spirit is doing what the Lord Jesus sent Him into the world to do. Christ is the Head of the church. The Lord wants light, and He is the One who pours in the Holy Spirit to get that light. If there is any light coming from my ministry, it comes from the Holy Spirit. He is the source. No light originates in Vernon McGee. I found that out a long time ago.

Christ does something else, and it makes me shiver. He sometimes uses a snuffer. If a lamp won't give good light and it keeps smoking up the place, the Lord Jesus snuffs it out. This is what John meant when he said that there is a sin unto death (see [1John 5:16](#)). You and I can be set aside. Oh, the number of people whom I have known to be set aside -- preachers and elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers! Christ put them aside. He is walking in the midst of the lampstands, and He wants them to produce light.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and
his eyes were as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;
and his voice as the sound of many waters [[Rev. 1:14-15](#)].

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow" speaks of His eternal existence. He is the Ancient of Days (see [Dan. 7:9](#)).

"His eyes were as a flame of fire" speaks of His penetrating insight and eyewitness knowledge of the total life of the church. He knows all about you. He knows all about me. He sat over the treasury and watched how the people gave. Last Sunday He watched you when you put your offering in the plate. You didn't think anybody knew what you gave, did you? Also, His eyes met those of Simon Peter after he had denied Him. After that happened, Peter went out and wept. If you could only see the eyes of your Savior today! My friend, He is looking at us.

"His feet like unto fine brass" or burnished brass is symbolic of judgment. That brass or brazen altar outside the tabernacle proper represents Christ's work down here on earth when He died on the cross. It was there that He bore your judgment and my judgment for sin. And now He is judging those of us who are His own.

General Nathan Twining was the man who gave the command to drop the first atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He later became the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he dropped another "atom bomb" on December 10, 1959, and it had just about as great a repercussion as the literal bomb did. He dropped the latter bomb when he told the French in particular, and the other European countries in general, that they were not carrying their share of the defense of NATO and that they were falling down on their responsibility in defending Europe. He told them that NATO was coming unglued. The repercussions from his announcement are still reverberating through Europe today. Although General Twining was accurate in his charges, the reaction was bitter, and there were counter charges made, and denials and excuses were offered. About that time, when President Eisenhower went to Europe, he received the coolest reception he had ever experienced. Why? The human heart resents criticism.

Human nature rebels against judgment being passed upon it. Man likes to be handed a passel of little rules and regulations which he can keep. That is the reason so many study courses are popular with Christians -- they want to be legalistic. They don't want to live by grace. Give Christians a few little rules they can go by, and they are very happy. The result, however, is a group of Band-Aid believers. They put on a little Band-Aid here and another one there, and they think that is all that is necessary to heal a broken leg. Why? The human nature that man has will purr like a pussycat when flattered, but it will bristle like a porcupine when failure to do a job is noted. That is the reason that the present position of Christ and His contemporary work of inspection are largely ignored by the church. He occupies the position of Judge of the church, and He does not flatter; He does not ignore what He sees; He does not shut His eyes to sin and wrongdoing. His constant charge and command to His own is "Repent!" We are going to see this as we move along in the Book of Revelation. He says to His church, "Change or I will come to you and I will remove your lampstand" (see [Rev. 2:5](#)). The church has smarted and squirmed under this indictment down through the ages and still does. This is the result of the natural resentment that is in the hearts of lukewarm believers. And the "Laodicean" church pays scant attention to what Christ has to say. As someone has said, "There is a Man in glory, but the church has lost sight of Him."

"His voice as the sound of many waters" is the voice of authority -- the voice that called this universe into existence, the voice that will raise His own from the grave, the voice that will take His own out of the world to be with Him.

All these figures add to the picture of Christ as our Great High Priest, inspecting and judging His church. Consider your Great High Priest. The Spirit of God will help you see Him in all of His beauty and glory. How wonderful He is!

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength [[Rev. 1:16](#)].

"He had in his right hand seven stars" means that He controls this universe.

"Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." One man asked me, "Do you think that a literal sword goes out of His mouth?" Of course not! Scripture tells us that the sword represents His Word. In [Hebrews 4:12](#) we read, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." God judges by His Word. He judges by it today. When He speaks the Word, my friend, you had better sit up and take note because He means business.

"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." You can't even look at the sun. Do you think you will be able to look at the Creator who made the sun, the One who is the glorified Christ? How wonderful He is!

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last [[Rev. 1:17](#)].

John is the disciple who had an easy familiarity with Christ on earth. He is the man who reclined upon His bosom in the Upper Room. John was very close to the Lord Jesus -- in fact, he didn't mind rebuking Him on an occasion. But when he saw the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, he did not go up to Him and pat Him on the back or shake hands with Him. He didn't even try to begin a conversation. He fell at His feet as dead! The effect of the vision upon John was nothing short of paralyzing.

My friend, since John reacted like that, we can be sure that when you and I get into the presence of the Lord Jesus, we are not going to approach Him in a familiar way. We will fall at His feet as dead. He is the glorified Christ today. And let me say that I do not like the irreverence of the "Jesus culture" that we see today, speaking of Him or to Him as if He were a buddy. Nor do I like to hear someone sing or say that Jesus is a friend of theirs. Now, you may think I am hard to please. You are right; I am. But Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" ([John 15:14](#)). If you say that Jesus is a friend of yours, you must be implying that you are obeying Him. Oh, my friend, if we could see Him in all of His glory and His beauty, we would not get familiar with Him.

But the marvelous thing is that He says, "Fear not." This is the greeting of Deity addressing humanity. And He gives four reasons why we should not fear.

1. "I am the first and the last." This speaks of His deity. He came out of eternity, and He moves into eternity. The psalmist says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" ([Ps. 90:2](#)). The word everlasting means from the vanishing point in the past to the

vanishing point in the future He is God. He is first because there were none before Him, and He is last for there are none to follow Him.

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death [[Rev. 1:18](#)].

2. "I am he that liveth, and was dead" -- or, the living One who became dead. This speaks of His redemptive death and resurrection. Most of us have a guilt complex. We are afraid somebody will point a finger at us and say, "You are guilty." We are, of course, but Paul deals with this question in [Romans 8:34](#), where he says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Where is the fellow who is going to condemn you? Paul says, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died." Do you find fault with me? Do you say I am a great sinner? I want you to know that Christ died for me, and He is risen from the dead. He rose for my justification to show that I am forgiven and that I am going to heaven someday. And He is even at the right hand of God -- how wonderful -- and He makes intercession, that is, He prays for me. We see this in His next reason:

3. "And, behold, I am alive for evermore." This refers to His present state. He is not only judging, but He is also making intercession for us. How we need that!

4. "And have the keys of death and of hades." The keys speak of authority and power. Jesus has power over death and the grave right now -- because of His own death and resurrection. Hades is the Greek word for the unseen world. It can refer to the grave where the body is laid or to the place where the spirit goes.

My friend, you and I can take comfort in the fact that Jesus has the keys of death. He is the One who can relieve us of the terrible fear of death.

Time Division Of The Apocalypse's Contents (1:19)

The following verses give us the chronological order and division of this Book of Revelation in three time series: past, present, and future. Right now I am making this division arbitrarily, and then as we progress through the book I can demonstrate that it is accurate.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [[Rev. 1:19](#)].

1. "Write the things which thou hast seen." Up to this point what had John seen? He had seen the glorified Christ. Let me remind you that this is a Christocentric book. The glorified Christ is the subject. Don't get your eyes on the horsemen or on the bowls of wrath or on the beasts -- they are just passing through. Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who was, who is, and who will be. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And John is to write the vision he has had of Him.

2. "The things which are." What are the things that are? They are the things that pertain to the church, church things. And we are still here after nineteen hundred years. The matters concerning the church are recorded in chapters 2 -- 3.

3. "The things which shall be hereafter." Or, as my own translation reads: the things which you are about to see after these things [meta tauta]. This is the program of Jesus Christ, and we shall see that the church goes to heaven, and then we shall see the things that take place on the earth after the church leaves it. This program of Christ is covered by [Revelation 4](#) through [Revelation 22](#).

Interpretation Of Seven Stars And Seven Lampstands (1:20)

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches [[Rev. 1:20](#)].

You see, John will make it clear when he is using symbols, and he will help us understand what the symbols mean. Otherwise, he is not using symbolic language but is talking about literal things.

"The mystery of the seven stars . . . and the seven . . . candlesticks." A mystery in Scripture means a sacred secret, that which has not been revealed before. And this had not been revealed before it was given to John. It pertains specifically to that which John has seen. He is the only one who has looked upon the glorified Christ. You may ask, "Hadn't Paul seen the glorified Christ?" Well, what did Paul see? He said that he saw ". . . a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun . . ." ([Acts 26:13](#)). I can't even look at the sun, and I don't think Paul could have seen Christ in all of His glory, but he knew that He was there. The brightness even blinded Paul for a few days. Therefore, John was the first to see the glorified Christ.

The "seven stars" are identified as the "seven angels." The stars represent authority. In Jude, [verse 13](#), apostates are called wandering stars. The word angel literally means "messenger" and may be either human or angelic beings. It could refer to a messenger of the angelic hosts of heaven or to a ruler or a teacher of a congregation on earth. I like to think that it refers to the local pastors of the seven churches which we are going to look at in the next two chapters. I like to hear a pastor called an angel because sometimes they are called other things. So, if you don't mind, I'll hold to that interpretation.

"The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The English word candlestick should be lampstand since it holds lamps rather than candles. It represents the seven churches of Asia, as we shall see. Then, in turn, these represent the church as a whole, the church as the body of Christ.

CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

Chapter 2

This brings us to the section on the "church," which is also called the body of Christ. He loved the church and gave Himself for it. The church is the body of believers which the Father has given Him and for whom He prayed in [John 17](#).

After chapter 3, the church is conspicuous by its absence. Up to chapter 4, the church is mentioned nineteen times. From chapter 4 through chapter 20 (the Great White Throne

Judgment), the church is not mentioned one time. The normal reaction is to inquire as to the destination and location of the church during this period. It certainly is not in the world. It has been removed from the earth.

These seven letters have a threefold interpretation and application:

1. Contemporary -- they had a direct message to the local churches of John's day. I intend to take you to the location of these seven churches in these next two chapters. I have visited the sites of these churches several times, and I want to visit them again and again, because it is such a thrill and because it brings me closer to the Bible. You can get closer to the Bible by visiting these seven churches than you can by walking through the land of Israel. The ruins have an obvious message. John was writing to churches that he knew all about. In *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* Sir William Ramsay said, "The man who wrote these seven letters to the seven churches had been there, and he knew the local conditions."
2. Composite -- each one is a composite picture of the church. There is something that is applicable to all churches in all ages in each message to each individual church. In other words, when you read the message to the church in Pergamum, there is a message for your church and a message for you personally.
3. Chronological -- the panoramic history of the church is given in these seven letters, from Pentecost to the Parousia, from the Upper Room to the upper air. There are seven distinct periods of church history. Ephesus represents the apostolic church; Laodicea represents the apostate church. This prophetic picture is largely fulfilled and is now church history, which makes these chapters extremely remarkable.

Now let me call your attention to the well-defined and definite format which the Lord Jesus used in each one of the letters to the seven churches.

1. There was some feature of the glorified Christ (whom John saw in chapter 1) that was emphasized in addressing each church. A particular thing was emphasized for a particular purpose, of course.
2. The letters are addressed to the angel of each church. As I have said, it is my understanding that the angel is just a human messenger whom we would designate as the pastor of the church.
3. He begins by stating to each, "I know thy works," although there has been some question about that in regard to a couple of the letters.
4. He first gives a word of commendation, and then He gives a word of condemnation. That is His method, but the exceptions should be noted. There is no word of condemnation to Smyrna or Philadelphia. Smyrna was the martyr church, and He is not about to condemn that church. Philadelphia was the missionary church that was getting out His Word, and He didn't condemn it. He has no word of commendation for Laodicea, the apostate church.
5. Each letter concludes with the warning, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith."

In this second major division of the book, we see the things that are, that is, church-related things. Each of the seven letters is a message which the Lord Jesus sent to a particular church.

We today may not be conversant with the fact that in the first and second centuries letter-writing and travel were commonplace in the Roman Empire. There was extensive communication throughout the Roman Empire during that period. Therefore, the seven letters of the Apocalypse are very remarkable for other reasons, the most important of which is that they are direct letters from Christ to the churches. (This means that we have two epistles to the Ephesians -- one that Paul wrote and one that the Lord Jesus gave through John.) Dr. Deissmann, in his book, *Light from the Ancient East*, made a distinction between letters and epistles which has been proven to be artificial and entirely false. The fact that these are called letters to the seven churches rather than epistles does not lessen their importance. They had an extensive outlet, and they reached multitudes of people. There were many outstanding churches in the Roman Empire, but these seven outstanding churches were chosen for several reasons, one of which was that they were located in probably the most important area of the Roman Empire during the first, second, and even third centuries. The area was important because it was where East and West met. By 2000 B.C. there was a civilization along the coast of Asia Minor (the modern west coast of Turkey). It is a very beautiful area. It reminds me of Southern California -- but without smog, of course. Not only is it beautiful, but some of the richest land is there. In ancient times the heart of the great Hittite nation was located there. Ephesus was founded about 2000 B.C. by the Hittites, as was Smyrna (modern Izmir). Pergamum obviously was founded later, and then Thyatira and Sardis even later, and they were made great during the time of Alexander the Great. The Anatolian civilization met the Greek civilization there. You can always tell the difference because the gods of the Anatolians (a more primitive people) were beasts, whereas the gods of the Greeks were projections and enlargements of human beings.

Ephesus was a city of about two hundred thousand people. It was a great city and had a huge outdoor theater which could seat about twenty thousand people. It was a place of resorts, and the Roman emperors came there. It was a city constructed of white marble, a beautiful place, and Paul commented on that. If we think that the impact of the gospel was not great in that area, we are entirely mistaken. Such was the impact of the gospel on Ephesus that four great pillars or towers were placed at the entrance to the harbor, and upon them was the emblem of the cross. One monument was dedicated to Matthew, one to Mark, one to Luke, and one to John. Only one pillar stands there today, but it still bears the symbol of the cross. And there are other evidences of the tremendous impact of the gospel where pagan temples were later turned into churches.

After the ministry of Paul and John, there was a tremendous Christian population in that area. It seems that Paul had his greatest ministry in the city of Ephesus, and Luke writes, ". . . all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" ([Acts 19:10](#)). Not all turned to Christ, but everyone heard. That was probably the greatest movement that has ever taken place in the history of the church.

The Church In The World (2:1)

Ephesus was not only a beautiful city, it was also the chief city of the province of Asia. It was called "the Vanity Fair of Asia." Pliny called it "the Light of Asia." It was both the religious and commercial center of that entire area which influenced both East and West - Asia and Europe. When Paul landed at the harbor in Ephesus, he looked down Harbor Boulevard, all in white marble. As he moved toward the center of the city, he saw all sorts of lovely buildings, temples, and gift shops. There was a large market on his right as he went up the boulevard, and ahead of him on the side of a mountain was a theater that seated twenty thousand people. Off to his left was the great amphitheater that seated over one hundred thousand people. At times there were as many as one to two million people gathered in Ephesus. It was here that Paul had his greatest ministry, and it was here that John later became pastor.

This city was first formed around the temple of Diana by the Anatolians who worshiped Diana. The first temple was a wooden structure, built in a low place very near the ocean - in fact, the waters lapped at the very base. In time, the Cayster and the little Maeander River brought down so much silt that, by the time of Alexander the Great, it had filled in around the temple. I have never seen any country that washes as much as that valley washes. The river itself is as thick as soup because it is carrying so much soil deposit. When Alexander took the city (by the way, the temple burned on the night Alexander was born), he turned it over to one of his generals, Lysimachus. Because the silt was coming and the harbor was filling up, Lysimachus moved the people to a higher location, and that is where the ruins of the city can be seen today. It is the city which was there when Paul came.

At the site of the old temple, a foundation of charcoal and skins was laid over this low, marshy place, and Alexander the Great led in the construction of a new temple of Diana which became one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was the largest Greek temple ever constructed. In it were over one hundred external columns about fifty-six feet in height, of which thirty-six were hand carved. The doors were of cypress wood; columns and walls were of Parian marble; the staircase was carved out of one vine from Cyprus.

The temple served as the bank of Asia and was the depository of vast sums of money. It was an art gallery displaying the masterpieces of Praxiteles, Phidias, Scopas, and Polycleetus. Apelles' famous painting of Alexander was there. Behind a purple curtain was the lewd and crude image of Diana, the goddess of fertility. She was many-breasted, carried a club in one hand and a trident in the other. Horrible is Diana of the Ephesians could be accurately substituted for "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Diana was the most sacred idol of heathenism. Her temple was four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens, and it was finally destroyed by the Goths in B.C. 256. Of course, it was standing in Paul's day. If you want to see something of the magnificence of the place, go to Istanbul, to the Hagia Sophia. Those beautiful green columns that are there were taken out of the temple of Diana by Justinian when he built Hagia Sophia. Seeing only these columns gives us some conception of the beauty of the temple of Diana.

Around the temple of Diana were performed the grossest forms of immorality. She was worshiped by probably more people than was any other idol. The worshipers indulged in the basest religious rites of sensuality and the wildest bacchanalian orgies that were

excessive and vicious. And farther inland, the worship of Diana became nothing more than sex orgies, and her name was changed from Diana to Cybele.

Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey to begin a ministry. For two years the Word of God went out from the school of Tyrannus. Of this experience Paul wrote, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" ([1Cor. 16:9](#)). Later John, the "apostle of love" and the "son of thunder," came to Ephesus as a pastor. He was exiled to Patmos, then after about ten years of being exiled and imprisoned, he returned to Ephesus. The Basilica of Saint John, which is located on the highest point there, is built over the traditional burial spot of the apostle John.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Ephesus (2:1-7)

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to this church in the midst of crass materialism, degraded animalism, base paganism, and dark heathenism. Note this carefully, because I consider this message to be one of the most important of all.

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks [[Rev. 2:1](#)].

This is my translation:

Unto the messenger of the church in Ephesus write; These things saith the One holding the seven stars in His right hand, the One walking (up and down) in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

Notice that He holds in His hand the church. It is under His control. He doesn't have that control now, but He did then. "He walketh" literally means that He is walking up and down. I believe that He is still walking up and down in our day and that He is still judging the church.

He has seven words of commendation for this church:

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted [[Rev. 2:2-3](#)].

1. "I know thy works." We need to understand that He is speaking to believers. The Lord Jesus does not ask the lost world for good works. For example, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" ([Titus 3:5](#)). In [Romans 4:5](#) Paul says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Christ is talking to His own. After you are saved, He wants to talk to you about good works. He has a lot to say about this subject. In [Ephesians 2:8-10](#) we read, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Paul could write to Titus, "They profess that they know

God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" ([Titus 1:16](#)). Someone has said, "The Christian ought to be like a good watch -- all gold, open-faced, well-regulated, dependable, and filled with good works." The Lord Jesus is saying to the church in Ephesus, as Paul had said, ". . . be filled with the [Holy] Spirit" ([Eph. 5:18](#)). And Paul went on to tell them what they could do as Spirit-filled believers. And now the Lord Jesus commends them for their good works.

2. "I know . . . thy labour." What is the difference between work and labor? The word labor carries a meaning of weariness. In the Gospel record it says that Jesus became wearied with His journey. That was the weariness which Ephesian believers experienced. They suffered weariness in their labor for Him.

3. "I know . . . thy patience." Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

4. "How thou canst not bear them which are evil." They would not endure evil men.

5. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." They tested everyone who came to Ephesus claiming to be an apostle. They would ask them if they had seen the resurrected Christ, and they soon found out whether or not they were really apostles. If they were not, they asked them to leave town. The Lord Jesus commended them for testing men, and I feel this is more needed today than it was even then.

6. "Hast borne . . . for my name's sake hast laboured." For His name's sake they were bearing the Cross. They preached Christ. They believed in the virgin birth of Christ; they believed in His deity; they believed in His sacrificial death and resurrection. And they paid a price for their belief.

7. "And hast not fainted." More accurately, it is "hast not grown weary." What does He mean by this? Earlier He said that they had grown weary, and now He says they have not grown weary. Well, this is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith. I can illustrate it by what Dwight L. Moody once said when he came home exhausted after a campaign and his family begged him not to go to the next campaign. He said to them, "I grow weary in the work but not of the work." There is a lot of difference. You can get weary in the work of Christ, but it is tragic if you get weary of the work of Christ.

These seven words of commendation, which the Lord Jesus gave to the local church at Ephesus, also apply to the period of church history between Pentecost and B.C. 100, which the Ephesian church represents.

Now He has one word of condemnation:

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love [[Rev. 2:4](#)].

Nevertheless I have against thee that thou art leaving thy best love.

They had lost that intense and enthusiastic devotion to the person of Christ. It is difficult for us to sense the state to which the Holy Spirit had brought this church. He had brought the believers in Ephesus into an intimate and personal relationship to Jesus Christ. He had brought them to the place where they could say to the Lord, "We love you." This may

seem like a very unimportant thing to us today, but their love for the Lord was very important to Christ. He was saying to the Ephesians, "You are leaving your best love." They hadn't quite departed from that love, but they were on the way. It is difficult for us in this cold, skeptical, cynical, and indifferent day in which we live to understand this. The world has intruded into the church to such an extent that it is hard for us to conceive of the intense, enthusiastic devotion the early church gave to the person of Christ. The early church first went off the track not in their doctrine but in their personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

Ephesus was a great city, and it had many attractions that were beginning to draw believers away from their first love for Jesus Christ. This was the church that became so potent in its evangelism in that area of about twenty-five million people that even the Roman emperors and the nobility of that day had an opportunity to hear the gospel. In that area there was such a mighty moving of the Spirit of God that it has probably never been duplicated since.

Every now and then we meet someone or read about someone who has had that close personal relationship with Christ. David Brainard, the missionary to Indians in this country, was such a man. He suffered from what was then called consumption (we know it as tuberculosis). He would travel to the Indians by horseback, and sometimes he would have a convulsion, vomit blood, become unconscious, and fall off his horse. He would lie in the snow, and when that happened, his horse learned to stay right there. When he regained consciousness, he would crawl back onto his horse and be on his way to preach to the Indians. As he went, he would cry out, "Lord Jesus, I've failed You, but You know that I love You." He had that close, intimate relationship with Christ.

My friend, that personal relationship is all-important in our day, also. We are so involved in methods -- I am rather amused at some of the Band-Aid courses which are being offered -- and they are making Band-Aid believers. Generally, the course is some little legal system that gives you certain rules to follow and certain psychological patterns to observe which will enable you to solve all your problems. They try to teach you how to get along with yourself (that's a pretty big order!), with your neighbors, and especially with your wife. All of those relationships are very important, and a great many people think that if they can follow a few rules, they will have the key to a successful Christian life. My friend, let me put it in a nutshell by asking one question: Do you love Jesus Christ? I don't care what your system is, what your denomination is, what your program is, what little set of rules you follow, they will all come to naught if you don't love Him. Although some systems are better than others, almost any system will work if you love Christ. An intimate relationship with Christ will make all of your relationships and all of your Christian service a joy.

The story is told in New England about two girls who worked in a cotton mill. They were friends, but when one of them quit working there, they lost touch with each other. Finally, they met one day on the street. The working girl asked her friend.

"Are you still working?"

"No," she said, "I got married!"

When that girl worked in the mill, she watched the clock, and every evening when five o'clock came, she had her coat on and was on her way out. It was hard work, and she didn't like it. Now she is married and she says that she has quit working.

Well, if you could look at her life, you wouldn't think she had quit working. She gets up earlier than ever before to prepare breakfast for her husband and to pack his lunch. Then she throws her arms around him as she tells him good-bye. All day long she is busy cleaning house and washing clothes and caring for two little brats who are two little angels to her because they are hers. Then when five o'clock comes, she doesn't put on her coat and leave; she starts cooking dinner. About six o'clock here comes her husband. She is right there at the door to throw her arms around him and tell him how much she has missed him that day. When a man comes home in the evening, opens the door, and hears a voice from upstairs or from the rear of the house calling, "Is that you?", he knows the honeymoon is over. But this girl is in love. Her husband's workday is over, but hers has only just gotten started. She serves dinner to her husband and feeds the children. Then she washes the dishes, puts the children to bed -- and that's not easy -- and works around getting things ready for her husband for the next day. I tell you, she is weary when she finally gets into bed -- but she's not working anymore, she says! Why? Because she is in love. That's the difference.

My friend, when your home life and your church life become a burden, there is something wrong with your relationship with Christ. When you get that straightened out, other things will straighten out also.

This is the reason the Lord Jesus said to the Ephesian believers, "You are getting away from your first love, your best love." What is the solution for them?

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent [[Rev. 2:5](#)].

"Remember." That is the first thing they were to do. Memory is a marvelous thing. Someone has said that God has given us memories so we can have roses in December. Well, here in California we have short memories so we have roses all year-round. But memory is a wonderful thing. Someone else has said that memory is a luxury that only a good man can enjoy. My friend, do you remember when you were converted? Do you remember what a thrill it was and what the Lord Jesus meant to you? Have you become cold and indifferent to Him? Are you in a backslidden condition? Remember. Remember where you once were. You can get back to that same place.

"And repent." Believe me, Christians need to repent. We need to break the shell of self-sufficiency, the crust of conceit, the shield of sophistication, the veneer of vanity, get rid of the false face of "piosity," and stop this business of everlastingly polishing our halo as if we were some great saint. Repent! Repentance means to turn back to Him, and it is the message for believers. How dare the church tell an unsaved man to repent. What he needs to do is to turn to Christ for salvation. When he turns to Christ, he will turn from his sin -- as the Thessalonians ". . . turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven . . ." ([1Thess. 1:9-10](#)). But the church needs to repent,

and that is the message they do not want to hear today. Remember, repent, and return unto Him.

"Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove the candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Christ says that He will remove your lampstand. Oh, how many churches in our day have been practically closed. Once the crowds came, but they don't come anymore because the Word of God is no longer being taught. My friend, Christ is still watching the lamps, and He doesn't mind trimming the wicks or even using the snuffer when they refuse to give light.

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate [[Rev. 2:6](#)].

Nicolaitans is a compound word. Nikao means "to conquer," and laos means "the people." We get our word laity from that. It is difficult to identify who the Nicolaitans were. Some scholars think that they were a priestly order which was beginning to take shape and attempt to rule over the people. Another theory is that there is no way to identify this group in any of the early or late churches. The third explanation is that there was a man by the name of Nicolaus of Antioch, who apostatized from the truth and formed an Antinomian Gnostic cult which taught (among other doctrines) that one must indulge in sin in order to understand it. They gave themselves over to sensuality with the explanation that such sins did not touch the spirit. That "Nicolaitans" refers to this cult is probably the best explanation. The church in Ephesus hated it. A little later on we will see that the church in Pergamos [Pergamum] tolerated it.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God [[Rev. 2:7](#)].

"He that hath an ear." This is what I call a "blood-tipped ear," which was the requirement for the Old Testament priests. Not everyone can hear the Word of God. Oh, I know they can hear the audible sound, but they miss the message. The Lord Jesus uses the phrase to alert dull ears. We learn from the Gospel records that He often used that expression. He said that they have ears to hear but they hear not. Now He speaks to those with spiritual perception.

"Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." "The Spirit" is the Holy Spirit, the Teacher of the church.

"To him that overcometh" refers to genuine believers, and we can overcome only through the blood of the Lamb.

"Will I give to eat of the tree of life." You will recall that man was forbidden to eat of the Tree of Life after the Fall, as recorded in [Genesis 3:22-24](#). But in heaven the "no trespassing" sign will be taken down, and all of us will be given the privilege of eating of the Tree of Life. I don't know what kind of fruit it has, but I believe it will enable us really to live it up. Most of us don't know much about living yet. We have sort of a vegetable existence down here, but we will have a good fruit existence up there -- we'll eat of the Tree of Life. We are going to live as we have never lived before.

"The paradise of God" means the garden of God. Heaven is a garden of green primarily and is not just a place with streets of gold.

The church of Ephesus represents the church at its best, the apostolic church.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Smyrna (2:8-11)

Smyrna is the martyr church, the church that suffered martyrdom for Christ. The word Smyrna means "myrrh" and carries the meaning of suffering.

The city of Smyrna is still in existence in our day. It has a Turkish name, Izmir, which may lead you astray, but it is the same city. It has been continuously inhabited from the time it was founded. I have been there; in fact, we stay in Izmir when we visit the sites of the early churches in that area. It is a commercial city. There are those who have told us that Izmir will soon be larger than Istanbul. It will certainly be a larger commercial center. There is a tremendous population there. The modern city covers so much of the ruins of ancient Smyrna that you are apt to miss the beauty which was there.

I have taken some pictures of it and use them as slides in an illustrated message. I try to point out the beauty of that harbor. It is very large and one of the most beautiful harbors that I have seen. In fact, Smyrna was one of the loveliest cities of Asia. It was called a flower, an ornament, and it has been called the crown of all Asia. The acropolis is located on Mount Pagos. In fact, the early city that goes back to about 2000 B.C., a Hittite city at that time, was built around the slope of Mount Pagos. Later Alexander the Great had a great deal to do with building it into the beautiful city that it became. There were wide boulevards along the slopes of Mount Pagos. Smyrna was called the crown city because the acropolis was encircled with flowers, a hedge, and myrtle trees. The city was adorned with noble buildings and beautiful temples -- a temple of Zeus, a temple of Cybele (Diana), a temple of Aphrodite, a temple of Apollo, and a temple of Asclepius. Smyrna had a theater and an odeum, that is, a music center -- it was the home of music. Also it had a stadium, and it was at that stadium that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and student of the apostle John, was martyred, burned alive in B.C. 155.

In Christian literature, Smyrna means "suffering." The Lord Jesus, in His letter addressed to the church there, said that He knew their sufferings and their poverty. He had no word of condemnation for them or for the church at Philadelphia. They were the churches that heard no word of condemnation from Him, and it is interesting that these two cities, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are the only two which have had a continuous existence. Their lampstand has really been moved, but there are a few Christians in Izmir. Although they are under cover, they have made indirect contact with us when we have been there. They do not come out in the open because Christians are persecuted even today in modern Turkey.

As Ephesus represents the apostolic church, so Smyrna represents the martyr church which covers the period from about B.C. 100 to approximately B.C. 314, from the death of the apostle John to the Edict of Toleration by Constantine, which was given in B.C. 313 and ended the persecution of Christians -- not only in Smyrna but all over the Roman Empire.

Now here we have the Lord Jesus addressing the church at Smyrna. It is His briefest message, and it is all commendatory -- everything He has to say to them is praise.

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive [[Rev. 2:8](#)].

And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna, write, These things saith the first and the last, who became dead, and lived.

This verse is a reference to chapter 1, [verses 17-18](#), which says, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." The Lord chose from the vision of Himself that particular figure which was fitting for each church. To the church in Smyrna the Lord describes Himself as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."

"The first and the last" means that there was nothing before Him and there will be nothing to follow Him. He has the final disposition of all things. The persecuted believers needed to know that He was the One in charge and that the persecution was in the planning and purpose of God.

"Who became dead, and lived" has a real message for martyrs. His experience with death identified Him with the five million who were martyred during this period. (According to Fox's Book of Martyrs, five million believers died for Christ during this period.) Christ was triumphant over death and can save to the uttermost those who are enduring persecution and martyrdom.

He has something further to say to them --

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life [[Rev. 2:9-10](#)].

There are seven things in this church which the Lord commended:

1. "Tribulation" is mentioned first. The word works is not in the best manuscripts. I prefer to leave it out, but if you want to include it, fine. Remember, this is not the Great Tribulation; it means simply trouble. Since the awful persecution of the church by the Roman emperors is not called the Great Tribulation, surely our small sufferings are not the Great Tribulation. But the church in Smyrna endured much tribulation, and they suffered for the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. "Poverty" denotes the lack of material possessions. The early church was made up largely of the poorer classes. When the wealthy believed in Christ, their property was confiscated because of their faith. "But thou art rich" denotes the spiritual wealth of the church -- they were blessed with all spiritual blessings. Notice the contrast to the rich

church in Laodicea. To that church He said, "You think you are rich, but you are really poor and don't know it."

When I am a visiting conference speaker in churches across the land, pastors like to tell me about the millionaire or persons of prominence whom they have in their congregation. Well, the martyr church couldn't brag about that. They had in their congregation slaves, ex-slaves, runaway slaves, freed slaves, poor people, and those who had lost whatever money they had when they became Christians.

3. "The blasphemy of them which say they are Jews . . . but are the synagogue of Satan." The implication is that the Jews in Smyrna who had come to Christ were Jews inwardly as well as outwardly. In [Romans 9:6](#) Paul says that not all Israel is Israel. It is his religion that makes a Jew a real Jew. His religion is the thing that identifies him. Speaking of them nationally, the Lord said that their father was ". . . a Syrian ready to perish . . ." ([Deut. 26:5](#)). But Smyrna was a city of culture in which many Jews had discarded their belief in the Old Testament. Although they said they were Jews, when a Jew gives up his religion, there is a question whether or not he is a Jew. In Germany many tried to do that, by the way. Down through the years there has been only a remnant of these people who have truly been God's people.

4. "Fear none of those things" is the encouragement of the Lord to His own in the midst of persecutions. This is the second time in this book that the Lord has offered this encouragement. History tells us that multitudes went to their death singing praises to God.

5. "The devil [Satan] shall cast some of you into prison." We are going to look at this fearful creature later on, but Christ labels him as being responsible for the suffering of the saints in Smyrna. You and I tend to blame the immediate person or circumstance which serves as Satan's tool, but the Lord Jesus goes back to the root trouble.

I would like to insert a personal word at this point. I could classify and pigeonhole everything that has come into my life as God's judgment or God's chastisement, but when I began experiencing so many physical problems, I was puzzled. Then quite a few people began writing to say, "I believe Satan is responsible for the things that are happening to you." And I decided this must be the explanation for the many physical problems that afflicted me.

6. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." There were ten intense periods of persecution by ten Roman emperors (these dates are approximate):

Nero -- 64-68 (Paul was beheaded under his reign)
Domitian -- 95-96 (John was exiled during that period)
Trajan -- 104-117 (Ignatius was burned at the stake)
Marcus Aurelius -- 161-180 (Polycarp was martyred)
Severus -- 200-211
Maximinus -- 235-237
Decius -- 250-253
Valerian -- 257-260
Aurelian -- 270-275
Diocletian -- 303-313 (the worst emperor of all).

7. "Be thou faithful unto death" -- and they were. They were martyrs for Him. He promises them "a crown of life." Remember that He is addressing the believers who lived in Smyrna, the crown city. It is interesting that to them He is saying that He will give crowns -- not crowns of flowers -- or of anything else perishable -- but crowns that will be eternal.

The Lord has special crowns for those who suffer. I know many wonderful saints who are going to get that crown some day. My friend, if you are suffering at this moment and you have wondered if He cares, He has something good for you in eternity. You will get something that no one else will be getting, except others in your condition. God's Word says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" ([James 1:12](#)). That crown of life means that you are really going to live it up someday. What a glorious prospect that is for invalids and those on beds of pain today.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death [[Rev. 2:11](#)].

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Have you heard Him today? Is He speaking to you?

"The second death." Dwight L. Moody put it like this: "He who is born once will die twice; he who is born twice will die once." And if the Rapture occurs during his lifetime, he won't even have to die that one time. The "second death" is the death which no believer will experience. The first death concerns the body. The second death concerns the soul and the spirit; it is eternal separation from God. No believer will have to undergo that.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Pergamum (2:12-17)

In our King James text this city is called Pergamos, but in Turkey it is called Pergamum, and I assume that is the correct spelling.

The church in Pergamum is representative of church history during the period of approximately B.C. 314 to B.C. 590. I call it paganism unlimited because during this time the world entered into the church and it began to move away from the person of Christ. This letter was Christ's message to the local church at Pergamum, of course, but it also has this historical significance.

First, let me give you the location of Pergamum. Izmir is the great city where tourists go because the airport and the hotels are there. You go about sixty-five miles south to reach Ephesus and about seventy miles north to reach Pergamum. These three were the royal cities, and they vied one with another. Smyrna (Izmir) was the great commercial center, Ephesus was the great political center, and Pergamum was the great religious center.

Pergamum was the capital of the kingdom of Pergamum. The acropolis still stands there, and the ruins of the great temples and the city are on top of it. It was a city in Mysia, labeled by Pliny "by far the most illustrious of Asia." It is one of the most beautiful spots in Asia Minor. Sir William Ramsay says that it was the one city that deserved to be called a royal city. In it was a temple built to Caesar Augustus, which made it a royal city.

Augustus came to this beautiful area when the climate got cold in Rome. There was a healing spa there. It was not the commercial city that Smyrna was because it was not a seacoast town and it was off the great trade routes which came out of the Orient. But it was a fortified, stronghold city, built to withstand the enemy. It was built on a mountain, and the acropolis dominated the whole region of the broad plain of the Caicus. The original city was built between the two rivers which flowed into the Caicus and entirely surrounded this huge rocky hill, this promontory that stood out there alone. To visit it makes quite an impression. First you see that great mountain standing there, and you see the ruins on top.

Not only did Pergamum boast great temples, but it also had the greatest library of the pagan world. It was a library of over two hundred thousand volumes. In fact, the city got its name from the parchment (pergamena) which was used. This great library was the one which Marc Antony gave to his girl friend, Cleopatra. She lugged it off to Alexandria in Egypt, and that library was considered the greatest library the world has ever seen -- and it originally came from Pergamum.

If you are ever in Istanbul and go into Hagia Sophia, you will see there a great alabaster vase, taller than I am and a thing of beauty, which was brought there from Pergamum. Of course, the city of Pergamum was rifled and denuded by the enemy when they finally took the city and destroyed it.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges [[Rev. 2:12](#)].

"To the angel of the church in Pergamos." This letter was addressed, as were other letters, to the angel or messenger of the church, which was probably the one we would call the pastor.

"These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" means the Word of God. The Word of God has the answer to man's need and man's sin, which in Pergamum was false religion. It was a city that emphasized religion, and the only way it could be reached would be by the Word of God.

I know thy works and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth [[Rev. 2:13](#)].

"Where thou dwellest." The Lord commends this church for three very definite things. First, He takes note of their circumstances. He knew that these believers were living in a very difficult place. And, my friend, the Lord takes note of our circumstances. Sometimes we are inclined to condemn someone who is caught in a certain set of circumstances, but if we were in the same position, we might act in an even worse way than he is acting.

"Even where Satan's seat [throne] is" reveals that religion was big business in Pergamum and that Satan's headquarters were there. This ought to settle the question for those who think that Satan is in hell at the present time. He has never yet been in hell because hell hasn't opened up for business yet. Satan will not be in hell until much later, as we shall see in chapter 20. At the present, Satan is loose and is the prince of this world, controlling

kingdoms and going up and down the earth as a roaring lion, hunting for whom he may devour (see [1Pet. 5:8](#)). But he does have headquarters, and Christ said they were in Pergamum at that time. Since those days, I think that he has moved his headquarters around to different places. I used to get the impression that he had moved them to Los Angeles, and he may have done so because that is another great religious center of every kind of cult and "ism" and schism.

The reason our Lord said that Satan's throne was in Pergamum was because of the heathen temples there. Of course, all of this is in ruins today. There are markers and some reconstruction going on there now. But in John's day it was Satan's throne. As you enter the gate of the city, you see that the first temple to your right is the imposing temple of Athena. Directly above it is the great library. You would see the great temple of Caesar Augustus and Hadrian's great temple, which covers quite a bit of territory. There are other things that are quite interesting. There is the great altar to Zeus with an idol on it near the palace of the king. It is a very impressive spot, and some folk believe that it was the throne of Satan. Well, I think that it is included but that Satan's throne is a combination of all of these.

There are two other areas which are especially outstanding. One of them is the temple of Dionysius. I crawled down the side of that mountain to get pictures of the ruins of the temple of Dionysius, which is beside the ruins of the theater there. Some folk asked me why I did that. Well, Dionysius is the same as Bacchus, the god of wine, the goat-god. He is depicted with horns, but with his upper part as a man and his lower part as a goat, with cloven feet and a tail. In our day that is the modern idea of Satan, but the notion that Satan has horns, cloven feet, and a forked tail did not come from the Bible. Where did it come from? Well, it came from the temple of Dionysius, the god Bacchus, the god of wine or alcohol. My friend, we ought to be proud that we are Americans, but we also need to bow our heads in shame. Do you know how we got this country in which we live? We got it from the Indians (and I guess they got it from someone else), but the way we got it was not by bullets but by alcohol. Also Hawaii was taken away from the Hawaiians by giving them liquor. Alcohol has taken more territory than anything else. Satan is the god of liquor all right!

Then the other outstanding temple was of the god Asklepios. Down from that great promontory was the greatest hospital of the ancient world. It was the Mayo Clinic of that day. It was, first of all, a temple to Asklepios. If you are looking at the Greek god Asklepios, it is a man, but when you see the Anatolian or Oriental Asklepios, it is a serpent. There in Pergamum it was a serpent. I have pictures which I took of that great marble pillar which stands like an obelisk now but apparently was a pillar in the temple of Asklepios. The construction of the temple was unusual in that it was round. There they used every means of healing imaginable. They used both medicine and psychology -- and about everything else.

Put yourself in this situation: you go down long tunnels, and above are holes that look like airholes for ventilation but are not. As you walk along these tunnels, sexy voices come down through the holes, saying to you, "You are going to get well. You are going to feel better. You are going to be healed." (Does that have a modern ring?) You go down to the hot baths where you are given a massage. There is a little theater there where they

give plays of healing. If they haven't healed you by now, as a last resort they put you in that temple at night and turn loose the nonpoisonous snakes which crawl over you. (That is known as the shock treatment in our day!) If they don't heal you, they will drive you crazy, that's for sure. They have a back door where they take out the dead. They don't mention the ones they don't heal; they speak only of those who recover.

Caesar Augustus loved to go there. He wasn't exactly sick; he was an alcoholic. They just dried him out every year when he would come over. This was a great place, and for seven hundred years it was a hospital that people came to from all over the world. May I say to you, healing was satanic in those days. There is no question about the fact that there were good men there who used medicine, but basically, it was satanic. It was where Satan's throne was. That is important to see.

Now here is another word of commendation to the believers at Pergamum, "thou holdest fast my name." They were faithful in their defense of the deity of Christ.

As we have noted, the church at Pergamum is representative of the church in general during the years of B.C. 314 to approximately B.C. 590. Actually, it was an age that produced great giants of the faith. When the Arian heresy (which denied the deity of Christ) arose, Athanasius from North Africa was the great defender of the faith, and because of him the Council of Nicea in B.C. 325 condemned Arianism. And another man was Augustine, who answered the Pelagian heresy which denied original sin and the total corruption of human nature and also denied irresistible grace. These are two giants during this period who stood unshakably for the great doctrines of the faith.

"And hast not denied my faith" refers to the body of true doctrine which is believed by Christians.

"Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr." Antipas was a martyr about whom we know nothing at all. He apparently was the first one at Pergamum, and there was a great company of martyrs who followed him.

So far Christ has had only words of commendation for the church at Pergamum, but now He condemns two things which were in that church --

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate [[Rev. 2:14-15](#)].

The two items for condemnation were the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. "The doctrine of Balaam" is different from the error of Balaam (see [Jude 11](#)), which revealed that Balaam thought that God would curse Israel because they were sinners. It is also different from the way of Balaam (see [2Pet. 2:15](#)), which was covetousness. But here in the verse before us, it is the doctrine or teaching of Balaam. He taught Balac the way to corrupt Israel by intermarriage with the Moabite women. This introduced into the nation of Israel both idolatry and fornication. And during the

historical period which the church at Pergamum represents, the unconverted world came into the church.

"The doctrine of the Nicolaitans." We have seen that the church in Ephesus hated it, but here in Pergamum there were some who were holding that doctrine. Although we do not know exactly what the doctrine was, it probably was a gnostic cult developed by Nicolaus which advocated license in matters of Christians' conduct and apparently a return to religious rituals by clergy, ignoring the priesthood of all believers. Christ says that He hates it! You see, Christ hates as well as loves. We had better be careful that we are not indulging in the things that He hates.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth [[Rev. 2:16](#)].

"Repent." In other words, the only cure was repentance (metanoeson, "a change of mind"). God's Word says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1John 1:9](#)). If they would not repent, the Lord said He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth, which is the Word of God. What a mistake we make if we think that the church has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. The true church is made up of believers in Jesus Christ, and they form what Scripture calls the body of Christ. They are to be lights in the world. And if we are going to be lights in this dark world, we need to be careful to identify with the person of Jesus Christ and to recognize, not the church, but the Word of God as our authority.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it [[Rev. 2:17](#)].

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This is to you and me today.

"To him that overcometh" is the definition of a genuine Christian. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Never are we overcomers, but we overcome by His shed blood. We know that the victory was won by Christ and not by ourselves.

"Hidden manna" speaks of the person and the death of Christ as He is revealed in the Word of God. In fact, Jesus said that He Himself was the Bread: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" ([John 6:32-35](#)). The believer needs to feed on Christ -- this is a must for spiritual growth. And, actually, Christ is hidden from view; He is not known or understood in our day. My, how folk misrepresent Him and abuse Him!

"I . . . will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." A white stone suggests that believers are not blackballed in heaven. Trench said, "White is everywhere the color and livery of heaven." Frankly, this is rather a difficult figure to interpret. But it is helpful to learn that the people of Asia Minor to whom John was writing had a custom of giving to intimate friends a tessera, a cube or rectangular block of stone or ivory, with words or symbols engraved on it. It was a secret, private possession of the one who received it. Well, Christ says that He is going to give to each of His own a stone with a new name engraved upon it. I do not believe that it will be a new name for you and me but that it will be a new name for Him. I believe that each name will be different because He means something different to each one of us. It will be His personal and intimate name to each of us.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Thyatira (2:18-29)

The church at Thyatira is representative of Romanism, which takes us into the Dark Ages from B.C. 590 to approximately B.C. 1000. It was a dark period.

When you leave Pergamum, you begin to move inland. Thyatira and the remaining three churches are inland. Thyatira was situated in a very beautiful location. Sir William Ramsay has written this about it:

Thyatira was situated in the mouth of a long vale which extends north and south connecting the Hermus and Caicos Valleys. Down the vale a stream flows south to join the Lycus (near whose left bank Thyatira was situated), one of the chief tributaries of the Hermus, while its northern end is divided by only a ridge of small elevation from the Caicos Valley. The valleys of the two rivers, Hermus and Caicos, stretch east and west, opening down from the edge of the great central plateau of Anatolia towards the Aegean Sea. Nature has marked out this road, a very easy path, for the tide of communication which in all civilised times must have been large between the one valley and the other. The railway traverses its whole length now: in ancient times one of the chief routes of Asia Minor traversed it.

Thyatira was located in this long vale or pass. Thyatira was a city built for defense. However, most cities built for defense were situated upon an acropolis or a promontory and walls were put around them. But Thyatira was different. It stood in the middle of that vale on a very slight rising ground. Its strength lay in the fact that Rome stationed the elite guard there.

Thyatira was built by Lysimachus and again by Seleucus I, the founder of the Seleucid dynasty, whose vast realm extended from the Hermus Valley to the Himalayas. It finally fell to the enemy. No city in that area was so completely destroyed and rebuilt as was this city. For this reason, it is very disappointing to visit the ruins of Thyatira in our day. They cover only one very small block.

This city became prosperous under the sponsorship of Vespasian, the Roman emperor. It was the headquarters for many ancient guilds: the potters', tanners', weavers', robe makers', and dyers' guilds. It was the center of the dyeing industry. This is where the labor unions must have originated! Lydia, the seller of purple, who in Philippi became Paul's first convert in Europe, came from here (see [Acts 16:14](#)). That purple color spoken of is what we know today as "Turkey red" -- and I mean that color is red. The dye was

taken from a plant that grows in that area. Apollo, the sun god, was worshiped here as Tyrinnos.

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass [[Rev. 2:18](#)].

This pictures the Son of God in judgment. His eyes are like a flame of fire, searching them out, and His feet are like burnished brass, which represents judgment. Christ is judging this church.

However, He has words of commendation for this church. If you think that the Roman church during the Dark Ages is to be condemned wholeheartedly, you need to check up on the history of it. The Lord Jesus says,

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first [[Rev. 2:19](#)].

Christ has six words of commendation for the church of the Dark Ages in which were many true believers who had a personal love of Christ which was manifested in works. Works are actually credentials of true believers. James says, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" ([James 2:18](#)).

The six words of commendation are:

1. "Works" were the credentials of real believers. There were many who lived spotless lives and by their good works "adorned the doctrine."
2. "Love." It was a church in which there was love, in spite of the fact that it had gone in for ritualism. There were some wonderful saints of God during that period: Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Savonarola, and Anselm were all men in the Roman church.
3. "Faith." Though it is placed after works and love in this instance, it is the mainspring that turns the hands of works and love.
4. "Ministry" is service.
5. "Patience" is endurance in those days of darkness.
6. "Thy last works are more than the first." In this church, works increased rather than diminished.

All six virtues are produced within the believer by the Holy Spirit.

There is one frightful charge of condemnation:

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols [[Rev. 2:20](#)].

But I have against you that you tolerate the woman (wife) Jezebel, who calls herself the prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

Jezebel had brought paganism into the northern kingdom of Israel. And evidently there was in the local church at Thyatira a woman who had a reputation as a teacher and prophetess who was the counterpart of Jezebel, the consort of Ahab.

And concerning the historical period of the Dark Ages which the church at Thyatira represents, pagan practices and idolatry were mingled with Christian works and worship. The papacy was elevated to a place of secular power under Gregory I (B.C. 590), and later by Gregory VII, better known as Hildebrand (B.C. 1073-1085). The introduction of rituals and church doctrine supplanted personal faith in Jesus Christ. Worship of the Virgin and Child and the Mass were made a definite part of the church service. Purgatory became a positive doctrine, and Mass was said for the dead. The spurious documents labeled Donation of Constantine and Decretals of Isidore were circulated to give power and rulership to the pope.

As Jezebel killed Naboth and persecuted God's prophets, so the Roman church instituted the Inquisition during this period.

"Seduce" means a fundamental departure from the truth, according to Vincent. Jezebel stands in sharp contrast to Lydia, who came from Thyatira. Jezebel is merely a forerunner of the apostate church, as we shall see in chapter 17.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not [[Rev. 2:21](#)].

"Space" is time. The Lord Jesus Christ has patiently dealt with this false system for over a thousand years, and there has been no real change down through the centuries in this system. In fact, Rome boasts that she never changes -- semper idem, always the same.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds [[Rev. 2:22](#)].

"Great tribulation" could refer to the persecution which Rome is enduring under communism. Or it may mean the Great Tribulation into which the apostate church will go.

"Their deeds" should be translated her deeds.

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works [[Rev. 2:23](#)].

"Children" are those who were brought up under this system.

"And I will kill her children with death" is translated by Vincent: "Let them be put to death with death," referring to the second death.

"All the churches" refers to the church of all the ages.

"The reins" means literally the kidneys and refers to the total psychological makeup -- the thoughts, the feelings, the purposes. When He searches the reins and the hearts, it means that He searches our entire beings.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden [[Rev. 2:24](#)].

But I say to you, to the rest in Thyatira, who do not hold this doctrine, which are of those who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put upon you none other burden (weight).

The church in Thyatira, we know from history, had a very brief existence because it went down with the city when it was captured by the enemy.

"The depths of Satan" perhaps refers to a gnostic sect known as the Ophites who worshiped the serpent. They made a parody of Paul's words. All heresy boasts of superior spiritual perception, and that is what this group did.

But that which ye have already hold fast till I come [[Rev. 2:25](#)].

Obviously, Christ is beginning to say to His church, "I am coming to take you out, and because of this, you should stand fast for Me."

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations [[Rev. 2:26](#)].

The works of Christ are in contrast to the works of Jezebel. The works of Christ are wrought by the Holy Spirit. We overcome by faith and not by effort.

"I give power over the nations" was explained by Paul when he wrote to the Corinthian believers: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . ([1Cor. 6:2](#)).

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father [[Rev. 2:27](#)].

This is a reference to the millennial reign of Christ in which believers are to share.

And I will give him the morning star [[Rev. 2:28](#)].

Christ is the Bright and Morning Star (see [Rev. 22:16](#)). Christ's coming for His own at the Rapture is the hope of the church. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)).

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches [[Rev. 2:29](#)].

The children of Jezebel will not hear, but the true children of the Lord Jesus will hear, for the Holy Spirit opens the "blood-tipped ear."

Chapter 3

Christ's Letter To The Church In Sardis (3:1-6)

THEME: The church in the world -- continued

In the panorama of church history, Sardis represents the Protestant church during the period between B.C. 1517 and approximately B.C. 1800. It began, I believe, when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses onto the chapel door of the church at Wittenburg, Germany. It is an era which started with the Reformation and takes us into the beginning of the great missionary movement in the history of the church.

Sardis was the capital of the great kingdom of Lydia and one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia Minor. It was located inland and built on a small, elevated plateau which rises sharply above the Hermus Valley. On all sides but one the rock walls are smooth, nearly perpendicular and absolutely unscalable. The only access is on the southern side by a very steep and difficult path. One time when I was there, another preacher and I tried to make the climb. He went farther than I did, but we both gave up long before we reached the top.

As the civilization and the commerce grew more complex, the high plateau became too small, and a lower city was built chiefly on the west side of the original city. The old city was used as an acropolis. Actually this made it a double city, and it was called by the plural noun Sardeis or Sardis. The plain was well watered by the Pactolus River. It became the center of the carpet industry and was noted for its wealth. Coins were first minted there. Its last prince was the wealthy Croesus who was captured by Cyrus. He was considered the wealthiest man in the world, and everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. Sardis was ruled by the Persians, by Alexander, by Antiochus the Great, and finally by the Romans. It was destroyed by an earthquake during the reign of Tiberius.

In our day the ruins of the temple of Cybele and also of the temple of Apollo can still be seen. It is one of the few double temples that you will find in the world. Cybele was known as Diana in Ephesus, but when you get inland, she becomes a nature goddess. She was the goddess of the moon, and Apollo was the god of the sun -- they were brother and sister. This was a very corrupt worship, much like the worship of Diana at Ephesus.

Extensive excavations have taken place at Sardis. They are rebuilding the gymnasium and also the synagogue. And they have dug up the Roman road that is there. The thing that thrilled me when I looked at that road was that I knew the apostle Paul had walked up and down it.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead
[Rev. 3:1].

"These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." He presents Himself to the church at Sardis as the One having the seven Spirits of God; that is, He is the One who sent the Holy Spirit into the world.

As we have seen, Sardis represents the Protestant church. My friend, the church today needs the Spirit of God working in it. We think we need methods, and we have all kinds of Band-Aid courses for believers in which you put on a little Band-Aid, and it will solve all your problems. What we really need to do is to get to the person of Christ whom only

the Holy Spirit can make real and living to us. This is the thing Protestantism needs today.

Following the dark night of the Dark Ages, the Holy Spirit was still in the world doing His work. He moved in the hearts of men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many, many others.

"I know thy works." This is the word of commendation. Remember that the Reformation recovered the doctrine of justification by faith, and this faith produced works.

"That thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Protestantism today, as a whole, has a name that it lives, but it is dead. Many Protestant churches today are just going through the form. They are building all the time, and people are coming, especially on Sunday mornings. But there are not many at the midweek service, when they really ought to come to hear the Word of God. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." This is a frightful condemnation and is a picture of Protestantism today.

We need to recognize that all of the truth was not recovered by the Reformation. For example, I believe that the doctrine of eschatology, prophecy, is just now being developed in our own day.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God [Rev. 3:2].

Let me give you my translation of this verse:

Wake up and watch out and establish the things that remain which were about to die, for I have found no works of thine fulfilled (perfected) before my God.

This is the second word of condemnation, and it is a word of warning which had particular meaning in Sardis. As I have said, Sardis was located on the top of a mountain. It had one entrance on the southern side which was the only way you could get into the city in the old days. Therefore, all that Sardis had to do was to put a detail at that one place to watch the city. But on two occasions in their history they had been invaded by their enemies because they had felt secure, believing that the hill was impregnable, and the guard went to sleep on the job. In 549 B.C. the Median soldiers of Cyrus scaled the parapet, and then again in 218 B.C. Antiochus the Great captured Sardis because a Cretan slipped over the walls while the sentries were careless. What the Lord says to this church at Sardis is this: "You wake up and watch out!" This was embarrassing because of the two occasions in their history when they had been caught napping. He says to the church, "Don't you go to sleep!"

Protestantism, as a whole, has turned away from looking for the coming of Jesus Christ, and they have built up these systems that certain things must be fulfilled before He can come. My friend, it is tissue-thin from where we are right now to the coming of Christ for His church. He could come the next moment or tomorrow. Don't say that I said He is coming tomorrow because I don't know. It may be a hundred years, but, my friend, His imminent return is what we are to look for. Sardis didn't know when the enemy was coming, and we don't know when Christ is coming -- we have no way of knowing at all.

In view of the fact that the Rapture could take place at any moment, the church is to be alert. The date is not set, nor even the period in which He will come, and the reason for that is that the church is to be constantly on the alert for His coming -- "Looking for that blessed hope . . ." ([Titus 2:13](#)). You see, anyone can make ready for a fixed hour, but you must always be ready for an unexpected hour. The Lord Jesus is saying to Protestantism that they are constantly to be on the alert.

"For I have not found thy works perfect before God." Protestantism did recover the authority of the Word of God, the total depravity of man, and justification by faith, but there are many other things that they did not recover. The Reformation was not a return to the apostolic church.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee [[Rev. 3:3](#)].

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." The idea is that they were to hold fast to these things because they were about to die. The great truths which were recovered in the Reformation are being lost. For instance, the Protestant church, by and large, has lost the authority of the Word of God. Rather than holding to the doctrine of the total depravity of man, many of our conservative churches are improving and using cosmetics on the carnal nature, thinking that somehow or another you can get up a few little rules and regulations which are going to enable you to live the Christian life. Also, the great doctrine of justification by faith has been pretty much abandoned, and a legalistic message is given that you have to do something in order to be saved. These are the things which characterize Protestantism today; it is very far from its original position.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." As we have seen, Sardis was built high upon a mountaintop which was impossible to scale except at one point. There is so much erosion of the soil in Turkey that two thousand years ago -- in the days of Paul and John -- the mountain was much higher and even more inaccessible than it is today. In spite of that, there were these two occasions when enemy soldiers gained entrance to the city. This was very embarrassing to this city -- two times it was captured because the guard went to sleep. The Lord says to the church at Sardis, "Don't you go to sleep. Wake up and watch out." He could come at any moment. The people of Sardis did not know when the enemy was coming, and we do not know when the Lord Jesus is coming.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy [[Rev. 3:4](#)].

But thou hast a few names (persons) in Sardis that did not besmire (defile) their Christian life (garments); and they shall walk with me in white (garments); for they are worthy.

In Israel it was never the corporate body of the total national life but always a remnant that was true to God. Here the church is told, "You have a few." In [Luke 12:32](#) the Lord

called His church "little flock." Protestantism today has its saints who love the Word, who are faithful to Him even in these days, and who stand by the Word of God. They do not engage in sin-defiling activities, nor are they engaged in fleshly activity.

Protestantism has produced some great men, and I will mention some, although I am going to leave out a great many. I think of the Reformation leaders: Martin Luther and John Calvin stand out, head and shoulders, above all others. Of course, there was John Knox, a great man of God who did so much for Scotland. Later on, there was John Bunyan, the great Baptist who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, which tells of his own life and how God marvelously saved him. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist church. God marvelously saved that man and used him in such a way that he is given credit by historians for saving England from the revolution which destroyed France and prevented it from ever becoming a first-rate nation again. Wesley has been called the greatest Englishman of all. He certainly did more for that country than any other Englishman who has ever lived. Then there was a man like John Moffatt, the Scotchman who went to Africa, and David Livingstone who first opened up that continent. William Carey went to India and later was followed by a sickly young man by the name of Henry Martyn. Finally, I always like to include Titus Coan, who led the greatest revival since Pentecost out in the Hawaiian Islands.

Protestantism has had some names who didn't defile themselves and were true to the Word of God. There are quite a few such men living today, but I wouldn't dare to begin to name them because of the fact that I would be apt to leave some out who ought to be included.

Protestantism has certainly produced some great men of God. Romanism did the same thing, even during the Dark Ages, but that does not mean to commend the system. The system of Romanism and the system of Protestantism, as they are revealed in the great denominations which have departed from the faith, to me are the organizations which will eventually bring in the apostate church because they have departed from the great tenets and doctrines of the Christian faith.

[Verse 5](#) is a difficult passage of Scripture --

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;
and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will
confess his name before my Father, and before his angels [[Rev.](#)
[3:5](#)].

"He that overcometh." The one who overcomes by the blood of Christ, of course, never does it because of his own strength, cleverness, or ability.

Now He makes this statement which has caused the difficulty in understanding: "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." It is interesting to note that in the genealogies there are only two books which are identified: (1) "the book of the generations of Adam" (see [Gen. 5:1](#)) -- we are all in that book, but it is a book of death -- and (2) "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ" (see [Matt. 1:1](#)). The phrase, "the book of the generation," is an unusual expression. It occurs only in connection with Adam and then in connection with Christ.

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ is the Book of Life. I believe that you get into that book by faith in Christ. This, then, raises the question here: Is it possible for you to be in the Book of Life and then have your name blotted out? Can you lose your salvation? If that is true, then the Lord Jesus should not have said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" ([John 10:28](#)). Again and again throughout Scripture we have the assurance given to us of our salvation.

I would like to give you now an excerpt from Dr. John Walvoord's book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, which is a very good explanation of what is meant in this verse:

Some have indicated that there is no explicit statement here that anybody will have his name blotted out, but rather the promise that his name will not be blotted out because of his faith in Christ. The implication, however, is that such is a possibility. On the basis of this some have considered the book of life not as the roll of those who are saved but rather a list of those for whom Christ died, that is, all humanity who have possessed physical life. As they come to maturity and are faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are blotted out if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour; whereas those who do accept Christ as Saviour are confirmed in their position in the book of life, and their names are confessed before the Father and the heavenly angels.

I think that that is a good, sound interpretation.

In Revelation there is a great importance placed on this book (see [Rev. 13:8](#); [Rev. 17:8](#); [Rev. 20:12](#), [15](#); [Rev. 21:27](#); [Rev. 22:19](#)). In these references the thought is that there are those whose names are recorded and those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life. We will talk about it again, especially when we get to the last reference in the twenty-second chapter.

Some have identified the two books in Rev 20:12, as the book of profession and the book of reality. They hold that names are erased from the book of profession but not from the book of reality. Others have suggested that all names are placed in the Book of Life at the beginning, but some are removed. A person's lack of decision for or rejection of Christ causes his name to be removed at the time of death. Both of these views propose serious objections as well as having good points to commend them.

I am confident that the whole thought is simply that it was amazing that anyone in Sardis would be saved but that there were some whose names He said would not be blotted out of the Book of Life. He didn't say that anybody had been blotted out; He just said that even in Sardis there would be some saved. May I say to you, the important thing is whether or not your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I do not believe that after you are saved you would ever be able to lose that salvation.

[He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches \[Rev. 3:6\].](#)

This, again, is the blood-tipped ear that needs to hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through the Word of God the message of Christ to His church today.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Philadelphia (3:7-13)

The church in Philadelphia represents what I call the revived church, dating from approximately the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Rapture. This is the church that has turned back to the Word of God. Today in Protestantism and also in the Roman Catholic Church, there are multitudes of people who are turning to the Word of God. Mail which I receive from all over the world indicates that there are people wanting to hear the Word of God and who are hungry for it. This period is pictured in the church of Philadelphia.

I have visited the city of Philadelphia, and it is today a rather prosperous little Turkish town. It is located in a very beautiful valley that is inland a great distance, about 125-150 miles from the coast. The valley is a very wide one which runs north and south, and the Cogamis River of that valley is a tributary of the Hermus River. The city was built on four or five hills in a picturesque setting. Today it is spread out a great deal, and it is a typical Turkish town.

Philadelphia is in an area that is subject to earthquakes. The great population that was in that area left primarily because of earthquakes and, of course, because of warfare. When Tamerlane and the other great pagan leaders came out of the East, it was a time when all those who were left were slaughtered. Therefore, today no descendants of the original population are there. However, this city has had continuous habitation from its very beginning.

This city was like a Greek island out in Lydia, out in the Anatolian country, an area which the Greeks considered to be heathen and pagan -- the Greek word for it was barbarian. In fact, anyone who was not a Greek was considered a barbarian in those days. The Lydian language was spoken there at first, but by the time of the apostles, the Greek language had taken over, and it was a typical Greek colony. This was the outpost of Greek culture in a truly Asiatic and Anatolian atmosphere. It was called a "little Athens" because of the fact that it was in this area and yet was truly Greek.

It was a fortress city used to waylay the enemy who would come in to destroy the greater cities like Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamum -- those were the three great cities. These other cities were largely fortress cities where garrisons were stationed either to stop the enemy or delay him as he marched toward the western coast.

Philadelphia is in a country where erosion is at work; the soil is quite alluvial, but it is very fertile soil. Beautiful laurel trees, many flowers -- I noticed that they are growing just about everything that is imaginable. It was particularly celebrated for its excellent wine. Great vineyards covered the surrounding hills, and the head of Bacchus was imprinted on their coins.

The city did not get its name, as so many seem to think, from the Bible. Actually, the city got its name because of the love that Attalus II had for his brother Eumenes who was king of Pergamum. Attalus had a great love and loyalty for his brother, and because of that it is called "the city of brotherly love."

In B.C. 17 a great earthquake struck this city and totally destroyed it. The same earthquake totally destroyed Sardis and many other Lydian cities throughout that area.

Tiberius, the emperor at that time, allocated a vast sum of money for the rebuilding of these cities, and they were then restored.

This is the one church besides Smyrna for which our Lord had no word of condemnation. Why? Because it had turned to the Word of God. It is interesting concerning the two churches which He did not condemn that the places are still in existence, although the churches have disappeared. However, in Philadelphia there is something quite interesting about which I would like to tell you. First of all, there are the remains of a Byzantine church, which reveals that Christianity was active there up until the twelfth or thirteenth century. The people who are caretakers of that area today must be Christians. Although I could not converse with them, they very graciously brought me a pitcher of water and a dipper on the very warm day I was there. The man and his wife who brought it were all smiles. I couldn't talk to them, and they couldn't talk to me, but I felt that we did communicate something of Christian love.

The remains of that Byzantine church are still there, but that is not the pillar that is mentioned in [verse 12](#), although many believe that it is, and that is where the guides take the tours. However, before my first trip there, I had seen a picture of a big amphitheater in Adam's Biblical Backgrounds; so I told my guide that I wanted to go up there on the side of the hill. The amphitheater was no longer there, but there was a Turkish coffee shop where my guide talked to a man. He said that there had been an amphitheater but it was totally destroyed except for one pillar. I have a picture of that pillar which is hidden away under the trees. Why did the Turkish government get rid of that amphitheater? I'll tell you why: The Seljuk Turks brutally killed the Christians in Philadelphia, and they wanted to get rid of every vestige of that old civilization. Today they would rather that you and I forget about it.

Philadelphia is the place where Christian and Saracen fought during the Crusades, and in 1922 Turkey and Greece fought in Philadelphia. There are apparently a few Christians there today, as I have suggested, but they are under cover because they would be severely persecuted.

The church of Philadelphia continued into the thirteenth century. This church was in a very strategic area to be a missionary church, and that is actually what it was. I have labeled it the revived church because it returned to the Word of God and began to teach the Word of God.

This represents something that I think we see in Protestantism today. It began back in the last century and has gained since then, so that Bible teaching is not something that is new, by any means, but it has certainly become rather popular today. We feel very definitely that our Bible-teaching radio program has come in on the crest of a wave of interest in the Word of God.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth [[Rev. 3:7](#)].

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write." The angel is the human messenger, the pastor, of the church. This is the Lord's method in all of these churches.

"These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." In each of these messages, the Lord always draws something from that vision of Himself as the glorified Christ, our Great High Priest, in chapter 1. Here He reminds them that He is holy. He was holy at His birth, He was holy at His death, and He is holy today in His present priestly office. He was so called at His birth when the angel said to Mary, ". . . therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" ([Luke 1:35](#), italics mine). And in His death He was holy. We are told in [Acts 2:27](#): "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (italics mine). He was holy in His death and in His resurrection. What a marvelous thing this is! He is also holy today in His high priestly office. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" ([Heb. 7:26](#), italics mine).

"He that is true." [John 14:6](#) tells us, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . ." True means "genuine" with an added note of perfection and completeness. Moses did not give the true bread; Christ is the true Bread (see [John 6:32-35](#)).

"He that hath the key of David." This is different from the keys of hades and death which we saw in chapter 1, [verse 18](#). This speaks of His regal claims as the Ruler of this universe. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" ([Luke 1:32-33](#)). He will sit on the throne of David in the Millennium, but today He is sovereign, sitting at His Father's right hand, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool.

"He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." He is the One today who is able to open and to close, and because of that He is a comfort to us (see [Matt. 28:18-20](#)).

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door,
and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast
kept my word, and hast not denied my name [[Rev. 3:8](#)].

I know thy works: behold, I have given thee a door opened, which none can shut, for thou hast a little strength [Gr.: dunamin], and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.

This is the verse that we have taken as the maxim for our "Thru the Bible" radio program. We began with it at the first, and it means a great deal to us.

The church at Philadelphia was the one which was true to the Word of God. In our day the church which it represents could not be called the Protestant church or the Roman Catholic church or any other church. Actually, it represents all churches the world over -- regardless of their labels -- which still remain true to the Word of God.

The Lord commends the Philadelphian church on seven counts:

1. "I know thy works." The Lord Jesus is looking for fruit; He is looking for works in the lives of believers. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it

is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" ([Eph. 2:8-10](#)).

My friend, there is something wrong with your faith if it doesn't produce works. Good, old, practical, camel-kneed James was a great man of prayer who said, ". . . shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" ([James 2:18](#)). "Works" are not works of law but works of faith. Calvin said, "Faith alone saves, but faith that saves is not alone." Saving faith produces works.

2. "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." This could be a door to the joy of the Lord or to a knowledge of the Scriptures. I personally believe that it is a door to the knowledge of the Scriptures, which means that if He opens the door, He intends for you to move in because He will open a door of opportunity for witnessing and for proclaiming the Word of God. I believe that both go together.

3. "For thou hast a little strength [dunamin]." Dunamin is the Greek word from which we get our English word dynamite. He says, "You have a little power." This was a humble group of believers which did not have impressive numbers, buildings, or programs. I get a little weary today hearing every Christian group making reports. Even here at "Thru the Bible" we like to tell you how many radio stations our broadcast is heard on. My, how we like to talk about those things! My friend, that type of thing is not worth anything. We like to talk about the hundreds of letters we receive from those who have accepted Christ -- that's nothing. The important thing is whether or not we are getting out the Word of God. He will do the counting. God has His own computer which is registering all this, and He tells us that we had better not. The apostle Paul said, "I don't even judge myself" (see [1Cor. 4:3](#)). Why not? In effect he is saying, "I may report too many converts. I may speak 'evangelistically' and give you a wrong figure. I may look at this a little differently than God does. I need to wait until I get into His presence for the accurate rendering of it."

4. "And hast kept my word." In a day when there was a denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, this church believed the Bible to be the authoritative, inspired Word of God. A twentieth-century theologian, of course of the liberal ranks, stated that no intelligent person could believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Well, that sure puts me in a bad light! I am, therefore, not an intelligent person because I do believe in the inspiration of the Bible -- that is, if his definition is right, but I do not think he is right even about that.

5. "And hast not denied my name." In a day when the deity of Christ is blatantly denied by seminary and pulpit, here is a group of believers who have remained true to Him by proclaiming the God-man and His substitutionary death for sinners.

This church in Philadelphia has been labeled many things. Some have called it the missionary church; some have called it the serving church; some have called it a live church -- all of these are accurate. I personally like to call it the revived church or the Bible-believing church; it is the Bible church. The thing that the Lord Jesus emphasizes is this: "Thou . . . hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." In that day of unbelief and skepticism, the Lord Jesus is commending this church because it has kept His Word.

This is the church that got out the Word of God and, as far as we know, this church lasted longer than any other of the seven churches mentioned here. Until the thirteenth century, it had a continuous existence. It was destroyed by the Seljuk Turks when they came in and brutally murdered all the believers who were left in this church. It was also a missionary church. It is the belief now that the fact that Christianity penetrated into India as early as it did was because this church had sent out missionaries.

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee [[Rev. 3:9](#)].

Let me give you my translation:

Behold I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie. Behold, I will make them that they shall come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

The remnant of Israel which was being saved had left the synagogue by this time. They had given up the Law as a means of salvation and sanctification. Those who continued in the synagogue were now in a false religion. As Paul makes it clear, ". . . For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" ([Rom. 9:6](#)) -- they were no longer true Jews. He considered the true Israelite to be the one who had turned to Christ.

Ignatius, according to Trench and reported by Vincent, refers to a logical situation where converts from Judaism preached the faith they once despised. By the way, the Roman Empire used Jews for the purpose of colonizing. They would send a regular colony of them into a foreign area, as they did into this section, and this is the reason there were so many Jews there.

6. "Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The Lord Jesus says here that He will make the enemies of the Philadelphian church to know that He loves this church. This is His sixth point of commendation.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth [[Rev. 3:10](#)].

Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I, also, will keep you out of (from) the hour of the trial, which is (about) to come upon the whole inhabited world to test (try) them that dwell upon the earth.

7. This last commendation is that this church kept the Word of Christ in patience. This is evidently the patient waiting for the coming of Christ for His own (see [2Thess. 3:5](#)). It has been in the present century that the doctrines of eschatology have been developed more than in all previous centuries combined. During the past forty years, there has been a revival of interest, both in Europe and in America, in fact, all over the world, relative to the second coming of Christ. Even the liberals talk about it now and then.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience." I believe that God today is still patient with a world that has rejected His Word. It is not like it was back in the days of Noah. They didn't have the written Word of God, yet God judged them; they did have a man bringing the message to them. But today we do have the Word of God. There is a Gideon Bible in practically every hotel and motel room throughout the world. In the different countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa, I find that the Word of God has penetrated all of these areas. The Philadelphian church is the church that believed in the Word of God.

"I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Christ's final word of encouragement to His church is that it will not pass through the Great Tribulation. The church is to be removed from the world (see [1Thess. 4:13-18](#)), which is its comfort and hope (see [Titus 2:13](#)). Such is the patient waiting of the church ". . . who through faith and patience inherit the promises" ([Heb. 6:12](#)). The church is not anticipating the Great Tribulation with all of its judgment (see [John 5:24](#); [Rev. 13:1-8](#), [11-17](#)), but rather it is looking for Him to come.

"The hour of temptation" is definitely a reference to the Great Tribulation -- it's worldwide. After the preliminaries are put down in chapters 4 -- 5, in chapters 6 -- 19 you have presented the Great Tribulation period. This is the period that He says is coming upon all the world to test those that are upon the earth.

"I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation." He says that He will keep them not only from that awful holocaust that is coming on this earth, that period of judgment, but also from the hour of temptation. Therefore, this is to my judgment a complete deliverance. When he says, "keep thee from the hour," I have translated it, "keep thee out of the hour of trial." By any stretch of the imagination, you could not say that this church is going through the Great Tribulation period. I believe that the period of the Philadelphian church continues right on through to the rapture of the church. This is the church which will go out at the time of the Rapture.

The church of Laodicea, as we shall see, is an organization which will continue on in the world, although the Lord gives a marvelous invitation to it, and many even in that Laodicean church will turn to Christ and be taken out at the time of the Rapture. But there is a church that goes through the Great Tribulation period, and that is the apostate church, the church of Laodicea.

What we have here, therefore, is the coming of Christ to take His own out of the world and His promise to the church of Philadelphia that it will not go through that particular period that is coming on the earth.

I would like to give here another quotation from Dr. John Walvoord's book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*:

If the rapture had occurred in the first century preceding the tribulation which the book of Revelation describes, they were assured of deliverance. By contrast, those sealed out of the twelve tribes of Israel in [Rev. 7:4](#) clearly go through the time of trouble. This implies the rapture of the church before the time of trouble referred to as the great tribulation. Such a promise of deliverance to them would seemingly have been impossible if the

rapture of the church were delayed until the end of the tribulation prior to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom.

Christ says to the church --

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown [[Rev. 3:11](#)].

"Behold, I come quickly." "Quickly" does not mean soon. Rather, it has the idea of suddenness and an air of expectation; that is, He will come at a time they know not. It does not mean He is coming immediately, but His coming will be sudden. This is the promise that is the hope of the church. Actually, the church is not looking for the Great Tribulation period. Nowhere are you told that you are to gird up your loins, grit your teeth, and clench your fists because the Great Tribulation is coming and you are certainly going through it! He never said that, but "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)).

Let me say again that the Philadelphian church represents the revived church, the church that has returned to the Word of God. It is this church that is to be raptured, His true church, and I do not think you can put them in any denomination or any local church. They are scattered throughout the world today, and you will find some of them belonging to some very funny organizations. I don't understand that, but that is apparently none of my business; that is something they will have to straighten out with the Lord.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name [[Rev. 3:12](#)].

There are two pillars in Philadelphia today. One is that of the Byzantine church, which I do not think is the reference here. But there is also a pillar on the side of the hill, hidden among those cedar and laurel trees. That pillar is all that remains of the city of John's day. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." The church down here was destroyed, but the permanent pillar is up yonder.

"And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." This is the passport and visa of the believer which will enable him, as a citizen of heaven, to pass freely upon this earth or anywhere in God's universe. He is a pillar to "go no more out," but with God's passport he is to go everywhere. Although this is paradoxical, it is all wonderfully and blessedly true.

"I will write upon him my new name." This is His name. We do not have a new name; rather, He is saying that He has a new name for Himself that He will give to us. This new name is a personal relationship we will have with Him.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches [[Rev. 3:13](#)].

The Lord has a message that He gives to each one of these churches. It applied to that local church, but it also applies to us today.

Christ's Letter To The Church In Laodicea (3:14-22)

The letter of Christ to the church in Laodicea is the last of these seven letters. Sir William Ramsay calls Laodicea "the city of compromise." This city was founded by Antiochus II (261-246 B.C.). It had a Seleucid foundation. Seleucus was one of the generals of Alexander who took Syria. Lysimachus took Asia Minor, but apparently Seleucus moved over into his territory and took some of his ground, including this city.

Laodicea was about forty miles east and inland from Ephesus on the Lycus River, which flows into the Maeander River. It is located at what is known as the "Gate of Phrygia." Out of the oriental East, the great camel caravans came down through the Gate of Phrygia and through Laodicea. This road came out of the East and went to Ephesus, to Miletus, and also up to what is called Izmir today but was Smyrna in that day. Laodicea was in a spectacular place, a great valley. Today its ruins are largely covered up with the growth of what looks like wild oats. Its name means "justice of the people." It was named for Laodice, the wife of Antiochus. Although there were several cities which bore this name, this was the most famous one of all.

Between Laodicea and going on up to the Phrygian mountains, there was in this valley a great Anatolian temple of the Phrygian god, Men Karou. This was the primitive god of that area. The temple was the very center of all society, administration, trade, and religion. There was a great market there, and strangers came from everywhere to trade. I suppose that the large market in Istanbul today is very similar to it.

Laodicea was a place of great wealth, of commerce, and of Greek culture. It was a place of science and of literature. It boasted an excellent medical school which, again, was very primitive and actually very heathen. Here is where they developed what was known in the Roman world as Phrygian powder, a salve for the ears and the eyes. Laodicea was also a center of industry with extensive banking operations. Cicero held court here. It is said that he brought notes here to be cashed in this city. Jupiter, or Zeus, was the object of worship in Laodicea.

The city was finally abandoned because of earthquakes. The very impressive ruins of two Roman theaters, a large stadium, and three early Christian churches are still there. The city itself has not been excavated. In other words, these ruins which I have mentioned protrude through all the debris and wild growth that is there. I have heard that there is an American foundation which has set aside two to three million dollars to excavate Laodicea. I would love to join that excavation for it would be very worthwhile.

Laodicea was a place of great commerce where they made clothing. As you stand on the ruins of Laodicea, you can look around at the nearby hills and see where Colosse is located and also Hierapolis, where there are springs. The greatest ruins are not in Colosse or Laodicea but in Hierapolis. The hills have a very funny color. The people took the clay from those hills, put it with a spikenard, and made it into a salve for the eyes and ears. This salve was shipped all over the Roman Empire. Today the chemical analysis reveals that there is nothing healing in that clay at all, but somebody made good money at it in that day. We like to think we are civilized today, but there is a lot of medicine on the

market that won't do you a bit of good; yet we are buying it just as fast as we can because of high-pressure advertising. We had better not criticize these people too much -- but the Lord Jesus did. He is going to tell them that they had better get the real eye salve that will open their eyes.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God [[Rev. 3:14](#)].

And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

This is the only place in Scripture where Amen is a proper name, and it is the name of Christ. In [Isaiah 65:16](#) it should read, "the God of the amen." In [Isaiah 7:9](#) the word believe is amen. In [2Corinthians 1:20](#) we read, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." The Lord Jesus is the Amen. He has the last word. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the One who is going to fulfill all the promises of God, and He lets the Laodiceans know this because this is the church that has rejected the deity of Christ. The word Amen is the only thing that He draws out of the vision of Himself that we had in the first chapter.

"The faithful and true witness." This reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ alone is the One who will reveal all and tell all. This is the day when it is very difficult to hear the truth. We certainly don't get it through the news media or from the government. Both our educational institutions and the military are great brain-washing institutions. Whom can you believe? Well, there is One who is the faithful and true witness even in the days of apostasy. You cannot believe the church in many instances today; the liberal church has no message for this hour.

"The beginning of the creation of God" means that He is the Creator. We live in a day when the myth of evolution, the evolutionary hypothesis, is that which is accepted. A college professor, a friend of mine, who has accepted the evolutionary hypothesis, said to me, "I want facts. I want science." I said, "Wait a minute. There are not but two explanations for the origin of this universe in which you and I live. One is speculation, because nobody was there to see it and nobody is able to come up with the answer. The other is revelation -- what the Word of God has to say. Very frankly, the difference between you and me is that you accept speculation and I accept revelation. As far as I am concerned, I feel that I am on more solid ground because I have the testimony of the One who did the creating, and He ought to know something about it." The Lord Jesus is "the beginning of the creation of God."

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth [[Rev. 3:15-16](#)].

With the other churches, when the Lord Jesus said, "I know thy works," He meant good works; He was commending them for good works. But the Lord Jesus has no word of

commendation for this church. All is condemnation here. Even the "works" here are not good works; they are evil works.

"That thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." This had a background and a local meaning for the people in that day. Being down in the valley, they had difficulty getting water in Laodicea. As I stood there in the ruins, I looked south toward the Phrygian mountains, some of which are very high. I was there around the first of June, and there was still an abundance of snow on top of those mountains. The Laodiceans built an aqueduct to bring that cold water down from the mountains. When it left the mountains, it was ice cold, but by the time it made that trip all the way down the mountains to Laodicea, it was lukewarm. And lukewarm water is not very good.

Down in the valley where the Lycus River joins the Maeander River, there are hot springs. The springs are so hot that steam is produced. The Turkish government has capped it and is using it today, and I understand they intend to develop its use even more because it is there in abundance. It is the hottest water you can imagine; a lot of it is just steam. However, when they would take this hot water up to Laodicea, by the time it got there, it was no longer hot -- it had become lukewarm water.

When the Lord Jesus said to the Laodicean church, "You are neither cold nor hot," they knew exactly what He was talking about. They had been drinking lukewarm water for years. Water left the mountains ice cold, and it left the springs steaming hot, but when they got it, both were lukewarm, and it was sickening. We like to put a little ice in our water, and many folk drink hot water, but lukewarm water is just not good, my friend. The Lord Jesus said that this church was neither cold nor hot and He would spew it out of His mouth.

A cold church actually means a church that has denied every cardinal doctrine of the faith. It is given over to formality and is carrying on in active opposition to the Word of God and the gospel of Christ. You find today in liberalism that they are in active opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hot speaks of those with real spiritual fervor and passion like the Christians in Ephesus, although they were even then getting away from their best love. Oh, the Spirit of God had brought them to a high pitch in their personal relationship to Christ!

But the Laodicean church was neither hot nor cold -- just lukewarm. Between those positions of hot and cold, you have this lukewarm state. I would say that this is a picture of many, many churches today in the great denominations that have departed from the faith. Many churches -- both in and out of these denominations -- attempt to maintain a middle-of-the-road position. They do not want to come out flatfootedly for the Word of God and for the great doctrines of the Christian faith. And at the same time, they do not want to be known as a liberal church. So they play footsie with both groups. I have broken fellowship with quite a few men who are extremists in both directions, some extreme fundamentalists and some extreme liberals. And many of these men attempt to play both sides of the street. That is a condition that is impossible. This is the thing that makes the Lord Jesus sick. He very frankly says that He will spew them out of His mouth.

To my judgment this middle-of-the-road position is the worst kind of hypocrisy there is. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" ([v. 1](#)). "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" ([2Tim. 3:5](#)).

In its beginning Protestantism assumed the position of believing all the great doctrines of the Christian faith. The creeds of all the great historic denominations are wonderful creeds. The Westminster Confession of Faith is unparalleled in my estimation, but it is now largely repudiated by the church that owned it for years. The Heidelberg Catechism is a marvelous confession, but who is following it? Who believes these wonderful creeds in our day? The churches have a form of godliness but are denying the power thereof. They have a name that they live, but they are dead. They are neither hot nor cold -- they are lukewarm.

This is the condition of the church today, and unfortunately, it is the condition of a great many so-called fundamental, conservative churches. Thank God that there are many who do not come under this classification. But the thing that is absolutely startling and frightening and fearful is that He says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." In other words, "I will vomit you out of my mouth." Does that sound to you like the church which He's going to rapture, to whom He says, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#))? I don't think so. That is the church He draws to Himself, but here is a church He just vomits out because it is lukewarm. Lukewarm water makes you sick at your stomach. I am of the opinion that if He spoke to a lot of churches today, He would say, "You make Me sick at My stomach. You're professed Christians. You say you love Me. You say it, but you don't mean it."

This is a heart-searching message for this hour because we are living in the time of the Laodicean church and of the Philadelphian church. Both of them are side by side, and there is a great bifurcation in Christianity today. It is not in denominations, and it is not Romanism and Protestantism. The great bifurcation consists of those who believe the Word of God and follow it, love it, obey it, and those who reject it. That is the line of division today.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked [[Rev. 3:17](#)].

Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and thou dost not know that thou art the wretched one and miserable (the object of pity) and poor and blind and naked.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich." The city of Laodicea was a rich city. I suppose that Laodicea and Sardis were probably two of the richest cities in that entire area at that particular time.

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They believed that the dollar was the answer to every problem of life. After World War II that was the assumption that the American government was run on. All we did was dole out dollars all over the world, thinking that we would buy friends, make peace, and settle

the problems of the world. Very frankly, I believe that our nation has probably complicated the world more than anything else. We thought that all we had to do was to allocate money and we would solve the problems of the world. My friend, riches never solved any problem. This church in Laodicea tried it: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

The Laodicean church made its boast of material possessions. Conversely, the church in Smyrna was poor in material things. It was the church of slaves and poor folk. There were not many rich and not many noble in the early church. Paul writes in [1Corinthians 1:26](#), "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

The present-day church boasts of large membership, prominent people, huge attendance, generous giving, and ornate buildings. A phenomenal growth in Protestant congregations, 242,000 in 1970 to 78,900,152 in 1980 (according to the World Christian Encyclopedia) would indicate the possibility of a church on fire for God. And there are other indications: Wealth beyond the wildest dreams of our forefathers; mass evangelistic meetings attended by tens of thousands; and use of other mass media such as radio and literature increasing constantly.

Worldly wealth is the measuring rod for the modern church. Spiritual values have been lost sight of or are entirely ignored. The church as a whole is not only rich in earthly goods, but also it actually is in the business of accumulating wealth. People are urged to make their wills in favor of so-called Christian organizations. Some radio and television programs and other professed Christian works are operated as promotional schemes to raise money to provide luxurious care for the promoters. My friend, you ought to check how the money you give to Christian work is being spent. When you write your will, I hope you will leave money for Christian work, but you ought to make sure that after you are gone, it is going to be spent for that which you intended.

On the spiritual side of the ledger, the Laodicean church is "the wretched one." It is worse off than any of the seven churches. It is to be pitied because it is spiritually poverty-stricken. In it is no study of the Word, no love of Christ, and no witnessing of His saving grace; yet it is blind to its own true condition. It lacks the covering of the robe of righteousness.

A pastor in Arlington, Virginia, put this in his church bulletin some years ago. It is an "Open Letter to Jane Ordinary" --

Dear Jane:

I am writing to help you shake this feeling of uselessness that has overtaken you. Several times you've said that you don't see how Christ can possibly use you. The church must bear part of the responsibility for making you feel as you do. I have in mind the success-story mentality of the church. Our church periodicals tell the story of John J. Moneybags who uses his influential position to witness for Christ. At the church youth banquet, we have a testimony from All-American football star, Ox Kickoffsky, who commands the respect of his teammates when he witnesses for Christ. We are led to think that if you

don't have the leverage of stardom or a big position in the business world, you might as well keep your mouth shut. Nobody cares what Christ has done for you.

We've forgotten an elementary fact about Christian witness, something that should encourage you: God has chosen what the world calls foolish to shame the wise. He has chosen what the world calls weak to shame the strong. He has chosen things of little strength and of small repute, yes, and even things which have no real existence to explode the pretensions of the things that are, that no man may boast in the presence of God.

When Jesus Christ chose His disciples, He didn't choose Olympic champs or Roman senators. He chose simple people like you. Some were fishermen, one was a political extremist, another was a publican, a nobody in that society. But these men turned the Roman world upside down for Christ. How did they do it? Through their popularity? They had none. Their position? They had none. Their power was the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Jane, don't forget that we still need the ordinary in the hands of Christ to turn the world upside down.

In the church today we sing:

With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.
The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the word:
From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.
"The Church's One Foundation"
-- Samuel J. Stone

Yet the inscription on the cathedral in L beck, Germany, is still true:

Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us:
Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.
Ye call Me Light and see Me not.
Ye call Me Way and walk Me not.
Ye call Me Life and choose Me not.
Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.
Ye call Me Fair and love Me not.
Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.
Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.
Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.
Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.
Ye call Me Might and honor Me not.
Ye call Me Just and fear Me not.
If I condemn you, blame Me not.

This is the church in Laodicea. This is the church that Stanley High spoke of when he said:

The church has failed to tell me that I am a sinner. The church has failed to deal with me as a lost individual. The church has failed to offer me salvation in Jesus Christ alone. The church has failed to tell me of the horrible consequences of sin, the certainty of hell, and

the fact that Jesus Christ alone can save. We need more of the last judgment and less of the Golden Rule, more of the living God and the living devil as well, more of a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. The church must bring me not a message of cultivation but of rebirth. I might fail that kind of church, but that kind of church will not fail me.

My friend, we are living in the Laodicean period today, and the church is failing to witness to the saving grace of God.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see [[Rev. 3:18](#)].

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" -- this is the precious blood of Christ.

"And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" -- this speaks of the righteousness of Christ.

"And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" -- this speaks of the Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of believers today.

This admonition was very meaningful to the church at Laodicea. Sir William Ramsay has this very helpful comment in his excellent book, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*:

The Laodicean Church must also learn that it is blind, but yet not incurably blind. It is suffering from disease, and needs medical treatment. But the physicians of its famous medical school can do nothing for it. The tabloids which they prescribe, and which are now used all over the civilized world, to reduce to powder and smear on the eyes, will be useless for this kind of ophthalmia. The Laodiceans must buy the tabloid from the Author himself, at the price of suffering and steadfastness.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent [[Rev. 3:19](#)].

This word zealous means "to be hot." This is His last message to the church. He says, "Be zealous." Be hot. Get on fire for God. He is ordering this church to forsake its lukewarm state, and He says, "Repent." This church needs repentance more than all the others. And the message of repentance is for the contemporary church, but you will not be popular if you preach that, I can assure you. It is not too late even for those in this church to turn to Christ: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Beginning at [verse 20](#) is a general invitation which goes out from the Lord Jesus at any time --

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me [[Rev. 3:20](#)].

This is a picture of the Lord Jesus at the heart's door of the sinner. It is a glorious picture. The English artist, Holman Hunt, attempted to put this concept on canvas. He pictured

Christ standing at a door. When he first painted the picture, he invited his artist friends to criticize. One of them said to him, "Holman, you have left off a very important part of the door. You left off the handle of the door." Hunt replied, "This door is a picture of the human heart, and the handle of the door is on the inside." This is the picture of Christ we have in Revelation. He stands at the door and knocks. He will not crash the door. Regardless of what some extremists say on this matter of election, the Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock. You will have to open the door to let Him in.

"I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This speaks of fellowship, of feeding on the Word of God, and of coming to know Jesus Christ better.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,
even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his
throne [[Rev. 3:21](#)].

Again, I call attention to the fact that when the Lord Jesus speaks of His relationship with the Father, He always makes it unique. He says, "My Father." He said, ". . . I ascend unto my Father . . ." ([John 20:17](#), italics mine) -- not our Father -- because the relationship is always different with Him.

The Lord Jesus is preparing us for the next scene that will be coming up when He says, "and am set down with my Father in his throne." This is the picture that we are going to see in the chapters which follow.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the
churches [[Rev. 3:22](#)].

This is a special message from the Lord Jesus to all the churches for which you need the blood-tipped ear to hear. This is the reason that you and I must be very careful in our study of the Word of God, that we not run ahead of the Spirit of God, but that we let Him be our teacher. If you have a blood-tipped ear, He wants you to hear what He has to say. Only the Spirit of God can make the Word of God real to you.

This concludes the messages to these seven churches. These are "the things which are," and they have been very important. I have spent a lot of time with these seven churches because they relate to the period in which we live and to our crowd. If we are a member of His church, we are also a member of His body, a part of that great company, beginning with the Day of Pentecost and coming down to the present hour, who have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

We have seen these seven churches blocked off into very definite periods of time, and they are largely fulfilled. I believe that we are in the period of the last two churches. As we have said before, there is a bifurcation in the organized, visible church today. There is that church, represented by the Laodicean church, which is moving farther and farther into the apostasy, and there is also that church which is staying by the Word of God, the church represented by the Philadelphian church. This is the church which will be raptured. The other church has a tremendous organization, including all the denominations, all those which profess to be Christian churches but which have long since departed from the Word of God and from the person of Christ. This is the division

that exists in the church. One church will be raptured; the other will go into the Great Tribulation period.

There has been a message for each of these churches. Personally, I enjoy going through these messages since I have now made several trips to the churches in Turkey, that is, Asia Minor. I have visited the ruins of all seven of these churches at least twice and some of them as many as four or five times. As we have come to each church, I can see the ruins before my eyes, and I can visualize the local situation. The Lord Jesus spoke to that local situation, and He was also blocking off all of church history because these are seven representative churches which cover the complete period of the church while it is here on the earth. And there is also a message in each of these for you and for me today.

To the church at Ephesus, there was a warning given that is also for us today. It was a warning of the danger of getting away from the best love, that is, getting away from a personal and loving relationship with Jesus Christ. The real test of any believer, especially those who are attempting to serve Him, is not your little method or mode or system or your dedication or any of the things that are so often emphasized today. The one question is: Do you love Him? Do you love the Lord Jesus? When you love Him, you will be in a right relationship with Him, but when you begin to depart from the person of Christ, it will finally lead to lukewarmness. The apostate church was guilty of lukewarmness. It may not seem to be too bad, but it is the worst condition that anyone can be in. A great preacher in upper New York state said: "Twenty lukewarm Christians hurt the cause of Christ more than one blatant atheist." A lukewarm church is a disgrace to Christ.

The Lord Jesus told the church in Smyrna not to fear suffering. Believe me, that is one thing that we in the church are frightened of today. We do not want to pay a price for serving the Lord Jesus, and yet that is His method.

To the church in Pergamum He said, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam. . . . So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" ([Rev. 2:14-15](#)). There is a grave danger in wrong doctrine today, and that was the thing that was wrong in the church in Pergamum.

To the church in Thyatira He said, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" ([Rev. 2:20](#)). The "new morality" is a grave danger for many today. Some folk think they can accept Christ and then live on a low plane. You will not get by with it, my friend, if you are His child.

In the church in Sardis, the Protestant church, there was the danger of spiritual deadness. He said, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" ([v. 1](#)). What about your church, brother? Is it alive? Are you alive? Or are you dead in a dead church today? Many folk are in that condition, and yet they talk about holding the historic doctrines of the faith. But, my friend, the glaring defect in Protestantism today is deadness. And that is the worst thing of all.

The church in Philadelphia was not in any grave danger. The Lord Jesus does not condemn that church at all, but He does say, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" ([v. 11](#)). What was it they had? He had commended them because they had kept His Word. We, too, need to be careful about this. As I look back now over the years of my ministry, I see men who started out true to the faith, many of them much stronger men than I was, men who defended the Word of God in a way that I did not in those early days, but they have now departed from the faith. I am amazed at that, but that is a grave danger even in the church in Philadelphia today. Nothing should deter us at all from keeping His Word.

To the church in Laodicea the Lord Jesus said, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" ([v. 16](#)). This is the apostate church which professes to be Christian but lacks reality. But even to this church He issues a final call to repentance and an invitation to come to Himself.

Chapter 4

THEME: The church in heaven with Christ

We have seen the history of the church in the seven churches of chapters 2 -- 3, but as we come to chapter 4, the question naturally arises: What has happened to the church? From chapter 4 through the rest of the Book of Revelation, there is no mention of the church except when you get to the invitation at the end, which is a general invitation and hasn't anything to do with the chronology of the book. From here on you will not find the word church mentioned. Up to this point, the word church has occurred again and again, in fact nineteen times. But now the church goes off the air -- there is no mention of it. It has gone off the air because it went up in the air; it was caught up in the air to meet the Lord in the air. The church has gone to heaven -- that is what has happened to it. The Rapture takes place during the Philadelphian period, and the so-called church which continues on the earth is just an organization. It will go through the Great Tribulation period, and we are finally going to hear it called a great harlot -- what a frightful designation! Actually, the most frightful picture in the Bible is the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. Are we going to see the church again? Yes, but she is no longer a church; she is a bride -- a bride adorned for her Husband.

Chapters 4 -- 22 comprise the final major division of this very wonderful book. John was given the division of this book, and he passed it on to us. We ought not to miss it, for He said in chapter 1, [verse 19](#), "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" -- that is, meta tauta, meaning "after these things." "Things which must be hereafter" of [verse 1](#) corresponds to "the things which shall be hereafter" of chapter 1, [verse 19](#). Both are meta tauta in the Greek, indicating a change from this to an entirely different scene and subject.

Several striking facts make it self-evident that we advance to a new division beginning with chapter 4. The climate and conditions change radically:

1. The church is no longer seen in the world, although up to chapter 4, there have been nineteen references to the church in the world. In fact, the subject of chapters 2 -- 3 has

been entirely devoted to the church in the world. However, from chapter 4 to the end of the Revelation the church is never mentioned in connection with the world. The final and lone reference is a concluding testimony after the world's little day has ended (see [Rev. 22:16](#)). Christ said of His own, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" ([John 17:16](#)). He also said to His own men, ". . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:3](#)).

2. The scene definitely shifts to heaven in chapter 4. Since the church is still the subject, we follow it now to its new home -- heaven. How did the church get to heaven? This is a good question, and Paul gives the answer: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" ([1Thess. 4:17](#)). He defines the operation in [1Corinthians 15:51-52](#): "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Faith places the sinner on the launching pad, in the guided missile of the church, from whence he shall go to meet the Lord in the air. The saints enter the opened door to heaven. The church is with Christ, and Christ is in heaven, directing the events of the Great Tribulation period that we are going to see when we get to chapter 6.

3. The church is not a name but a definition of those who have trusted Christ in this age. This is something which we need to get fixed in our minds because our thinking on this today is often muddled. The word church is ekklesia in the Greek; kaleo means "to call," and ek means "out of." Therefore, ekklesia means "a group of people called out of the world."

When the church arrives at its destination in heaven, it loses the name by which it was known in the world and other terms are used to describe it. We are going to see it in chapter 4 as twenty-four elders, representatives of the church in heaven. We are also going to see the church in heaven as a bride, coming down to her new home, the New Jerusalem.

The apostate organization, which bears the ecclesiastical terminology and continues on in the world, is not hereafter given the title of "church" either, but the frightful label of "the harlot." The late Dr. George Gill said years ago in a seminary class, "There are going to be some churches which will meet the next Sunday after the Rapture, and they won't be missing a member -- they will all be there." Why? Because it is the church of Laodicea -- that is, it professes to be Christian but lacks reality.

4. The judgments beginning at chapter 6 would not be in harmony with the gracious provision and promise that God has made to the church. If the church remained in the world, it would frustrate the grace of God because He has promised to deliver us from judgment.

5. Finally, to continue from chapter 3 to chapter 4 without recognizing the break is to ignore the normal and natural division in the book as stated in chapter 1, [verse 19](#).

As we enter this last division of the book with all of its judgment and wrath, it is well to keep in our perspective that Jesus Christ is central. He is directing all events as He brings them to a successful but determined conclusion. There is "in the midst of the throne . . . a Lamb" ([Rev. 7:17](#)). He is a Lamb because He died for the sins of the world. And He is the One who is going to judge.

After these things, after the church things have concluded, the scene shifts from earth to heaven. It is a radical change. However, the Word of God describes personages and activities in heaven as normally as it described them on earth. There is no strain or involvement in superstition or mystery. The bridge over the great gulf is passed with ease and a reverent restraint. Only the Holy Spirit could describe things in heaven with as much ease as He describes things on the earth. What would have happened if a man had written this book? You know that the minute he got to the heavenly scene, he would have the wildest sort of things to say. How do I know that? Well, read the books that are out today which try to describe the overworld and the underworld and the unseen world. They are always rather startling and amazing. In fact, the use of this approach is one way that we can know a book is false. There is an awful obsession today, even among some Christians, with the subject of demons and of the Devil. I have no truck with that outfit at all. I have often been asked why I haven't written a book on this subject. Frankly, at first I thought I would, but when so many books started coming out, all as wild as a March Hare and all dealing with the sensational, I changed my mind. You don't have the sensational here in Revelation. We simply move to heaven, and the scene is awe inspiring, but it lacks that which man would put in.

The church is not seen under the familiar name it had in the world, but is now the priesthood of believers with the Great High Priest. Heavenly scenes and creatures greet us in this section (chs. 4 -- 5) before our attention is drawn to the earth where, at the opening of the Great Tribulation, the four horsemen are to ride.

The Throne Of God (4:1-3)

Christ is viewed here in His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. He is worshiped as God because He is God.

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter [[Rev. 4:1](#)].

Here is my translation of this first verse:

After these things [Gr.: meta tauta] I saw, and behold a door set open in heaven; and the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me and saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass after these things (meta tauta).

"After these things" (meta tauta) is used twice here; it both opens and closes the verse. This repetition certainly lends great emphasis and importance to the phrase. Apparently, John was afraid the amillennialists would miss it; so he used it twice in this particular place.

"I saw" -- that is the eye-gate. "I heard" -- that is the ear-gate. This is like a television program which we are looking at. This is the first great television program. We have had a wonderful treat in our day to view a television program from the moon, but that is nothing in comparison -- here is a television program from heaven! This ought to interest believers a great deal and not cause us to take off like a skyrocket into some wild sort of dreamy stuff. Heaven is a real place. There is a lot of reality there, and we ought not to get uptight over this scene that is now before us. We need to handle it in a normal way, but I admit that I cannot help but get excited about it all.

"I saw, and behold a door set open in heaven." This is one of the four open doors in the Book of Revelation:

1. In chapter 3, [verse 8](#), speaking to the church in Philadelphia, the Lord Jesus says, "I have set before thee an open door." It seems that this refers to a door of opportunity for giving out the Word of God.
2. The open door of invitation and identification with Christ is in chapter 3, [verse 20](#): "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." That door is the door to your heart.
3. We have an open door here in [verse 1](#), which is the way to God through Christ, as we shall see.
4. In chapter 19, [verse 11](#), we see a door opened in heaven again. That is the open door through which Christ will come at His second coming. He comes out at the end of the Great Tribulation to put down all of the unrighteousness and rebellion against God and to establish His Kingdom.

John did not see this door opening as the Authorized Version of [verse 1](#) suggests. This door was open all the time. It is the door through which believers have come to God for over nineteen hundred years. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)). He also said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" ([John 10:9](#)). The open door to heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ. He also is the One who will come to the door of your heart -- that is the wonder and glory of it all.

We enter by faith. In modern terminology, we might express it thus: faith puts us on the launching pad of the church, which is Christ, and at the Rapture we go through this door like a guided missile. It is not just shot out into space going nowhere, but if man can hit the target of the moon, I do not think the Lord Jesus will have any trouble getting His church into heaven.

"Come up hither" is heaven's invitation to John, and it is an invitation to all of the fellowship that know Christ as Savior. John wrote in [1John 1:3](#): "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

John is saying in effect, "We heard it, we saw it, and we declare it unto you. I am letting you know this so that you can have fellowship also, and one of these days you will be going up through that open door."

"And the first voice which I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me." This is the sound which calls the church to meet Christ in the air. And whose voice is it? It is the voice of Christ. This introduces us to one of the simple symbols which occurs frequently from here on in the Revelation. That it is a symbol is evident -- a trumpet does not speak. Jazz devotees describe the trumpet playing of certain musicians by saying that their trumpets "talk." When jazz addicts say that, they are just using a symbol. A trumpet never talks. The voice of Christ is like a trumpet, and this is the voice that Paul wrote of in [1Thessalonians 4:16-17](#): "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This is a definite statement concerning the Rapture. When anyone tells you that the word rapture is not in the Bible, remember that the Greek word for "caught up" is *harpazo*; it means "caught up, raptured, or snatched up." Hal Lindsey calls the Rapture "the great snatch." I guess that is good vocabulary for young people today, but I prefer the term "caught up," and it means rapture. If you don't like the word rapture, then call it *harpazo*. That's what Paul called it. We are to be caught up, and His voice will be like a trumpet. It pulled John up, and someday it will pull you and me up.

"Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must come to pass after these things." After what things? After the church has completed its earthly run and is caught up.

And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne [[Rev. 4:2](#)].

At once (straightway) I found myself in the Spirit: and behold, a throne set in heaven, and one sitting on the throne.

"At once (straightway)" denotes the brevity of time, which is one of the characteristics of the Rapture. Paul said that we are to be caught up "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (see [1Cor. 15:51-52](#)). A twinkling of an eye is pretty brief. Some psychologist has measured it. He considered the twinkling of an eye to be, not the going down of the eyelid, but the going up of the eyelid -- that is reducing it to a fine point! But he determined that it is 1/1000 of a second. That is how quick the Rapture is going to be -- immediately, straightway, at once.

"I found myself in the Spirit." In other words, the Holy Spirit is still guiding John into new truth and is showing him things to come (see [John 16:13](#)).

"And, behold, a throne set in heaven, and one sitting on the throne." The throne was already there, but John now sees it for the first time. Our attention is now directed to the center of attraction. The throne represents the universal sovereignty and rulership of God. It means that He is in control. The general headquarters of this universe is in heaven, not in Washington, D.C., or London or Moscow or any other place down here. This is the

picture that we are given in the Word of God. We read in [Psalm 11:4](#), "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" (see also [Ps. 47:8](#); [Ps. 97:2](#); [Ps. 103:19](#); [Ezek. 1:26-28](#)). It is the throne of God the Father, and Jesus sits at His right hand. [Psalm 110:1](#) tells us, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (see also [Heb. 1:3](#); [Heb. 12:2](#)). The Lord Jesus is in charge of all events here.

The throne of grace now becomes a throne of judgment. This is another reason that I say very definitely that the church is gone from the world when this takes place. If the church were still on the earth when Christ has left the place of intercession and has come to the place of judgment, He is in the wrong place for the church.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone:
and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto
an emerald [[Rev. 4:3](#)].

All that we see here is color, beautiful color like precious stones. We do not get a picture of God at all -- He never has been photographed. Our attention is directed to the One who is seated on the throne. Although He is God the Father, we should understand this to be the throne of the triune God. Nevertheless, the three persons of the Trinity are distinguished: (1) God the Holy Spirit in [verses 2](#) and 5; (2) God the Father here in [verse 3](#); and (3) God the Son in [verse 5](#) of chapter 5. What we have before us here is the Trinity upon the throne.

John could distinguish no form of a person on the throne, only the brilliance and brightness of precious stones.

"And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper." The jasper stone was the last stone identified in the breastplate of the high priest (see [Exod. 28:20](#)). It was first in the foundation of the New Jerusalem and also the first seen in the wall of the New Jerusalem (see [Rev. 21:18-19](#)). It was a many-colored stone with purple predominating. Some identify it with a diamond. It was in the breastplate of the high priest of Israel, representing little Benjamin whom Jacob called "the son of my right hand." Perhaps this speaks of Christ as He ascended and took His place at the right hand of the Father.

The "sardine stone" is the sixth stone in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (see [Rev. 21:20](#)). Pliny says it was discovered in Sardis from which it derived its name. In color it was a fiery red. The sardine stone was the first stone in the breastplate of the high priest, representing the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob. And Christ is the Son of God, the firstborn from the dead.

"Rainbow" is the Greek word iris, which can also mean "halo." While the rainbow is polychrome, here it is emerald, which is green (see [Ezek. 1:28](#)). After the judgment of the Flood, the rainbow appeared as a reminder of God's covenant not to destroy the earth again with a flood (see [Gen. 9:13-15](#)). It appears here before the judgment of the Great Tribulation as a reminder that a flood will not be used in judgment. Green is the color of the earth. The suggestion here is that of the prophet Habakkuk: ". . . in wrath remember mercy" ([Hab. 3:2](#)) -- and God will do that.

The Twenty-four Elders (4:4-5)

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold [[Rev. 4:4](#)].

There has been a great deal of speculation as to who these elders are. The Greek word for "elders" is presbuteros. By the way, the word presbyterian comes from that, and I am reminded of the story about the little girl who came home from her Presbyterian Sunday school, and her mother asked her what they had talked about. "We talked about heaven," the little girl replied. "Well, what did they say about it?" her mother asked. "The teacher said that there were only twenty-four Presbyterians there!"

Seriously, elders were representatives. We know that Israel had elders and that elders were appointed in the early churches to rule and to represent the entire church (see [Titus 1:5](#)). Their role was clearly understood by the people in John's day. These twenty-four elders stand for the total church from Pentecost to the Rapture. Therefore, I can say categorically and dogmatically that here is the church in heaven.

"White raiment" is the righteousness of Christ (see [2Cor. 5:21](#)).

"Crowns of gold" indicates that the church will rule with Christ (see [1Cor. 6:3](#)). Crowns are also given as rewards (see [2Tim. 4:8](#); [James 1:12](#); [1Pet. 5:4](#)) when the bema judgment, the judgment seat of Christ, takes place.

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God [[Rev. 4:5](#)].

The tense here is the present tense; it should be proceed, not proceeded. It is taking place right there and then.

"Lightnings and thunderings" always precede a storm in the Midwest and generally indicate the intensity of the storm. I think that the meaning here is that judgment is coming.

"And voices" indicates that it is not a haphazard judgment, but it is directed by the One on the throne.

"The seven Spirits of God" is a clear reference to the Holy Spirit.

The Four Living Creatures (4:6-11)

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind [[Rev. 4:6](#)].

"A sea of glass" denotes its appearance and not the material of which it is made. This sea is before the throne of God and is another indication that the emphasis is not on mercy but on judgment. This sea represents the holiness and righteousness of God (see [Matt. 5:8](#); [Heb. 12:14](#)).

We are told in [1Thessalonians 3:13](#), "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." This placid sea indicates the position of rest to which the church has come.

No longer is she the victim of the storms of life. No longer is she out there on the tossing sea.

"Four beasts" are literally "four living creatures." The Greek word is *zoa*, from which we get our English word *zoo*. It doesn't mean a wild beast as we might think. We will have a wild beast when we get to chapter 13, but that is a different word and a different type of beast. This is just a living creature. The emphasis is not upon the bestial, but upon the vital, upon the fact that they are living.

"Four beasts full of eyes before and behind." This speaks of their alertness and awareness. They resemble both the cherubim of [Ezekiel 1:5-10](#); [Ezekiel 10:20](#); and the seraphim of [Isaiah 6:2-3](#).

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf,
and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was
like a flying eagle [[Rev. 4:7](#)].

I agree with those who identify each of these living creatures with the Gospel which it represents, and I believe this is accurate, although such an application is questioned a great deal.

"The first living creature was like a lion," and the first Gospel represents the Lord Jesus as the King. He was born a King, He lived a King, He died a King, He was raised a King, and He is coming again as a King. Everything He does in the Gospel of Matthew He does as the King. Remember that God said that the tribe of Judah was like a lion, that the King, the Ruler, would come from that tribe, and that the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh came (see [Gen. 49:9-10](#); [Rev. 5:5](#)).

"The second living creature like a calf [ox]." This is the beast of burden, the servant animal domesticated. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ is presented as the Servant. There is no genealogy given in this Gospel. If you hire someone to mow your lawn or to wash your dishes, you do not ask him who his papa and mama are. What difference does it make? You want to know whether or not he can do the job. The Gospel of Mark presents Christ as the Servant.

"The third living creature had a face as a man." The third Gospel, the Gospel of Luke, presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man. It is His humanity that is emphasized.

"The fourth living creature was like a flying eagle." He communicates the deity of Christ as seen in the Gospel of John.

These living creatures also represent the animal world, as suggested by Godet. The lion represents wild beasts, the calf represents domesticated beasts, the eagle represents birds, and man is the head of all creation. Note that there is no mention of fish. In the new heaven and the new earth, there will be no more sea, and since there is no sea, you will not need any fish. Nor will there be reptiles. The serpent will not be there to introduce sin as he did at the beginning.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and
they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night,

saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come [[Rev. 4:8](#)].

These six wings correspond to the seraphim of [Isaiah 6:2](#).

Instead of had, it should be having -- this is the present tense. This is where the action is, and this is taking place.

That which they say repeatedly is, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." This is the same refrain as that of the seraphim in [Isaiah 6:3](#).

"Which was, and is, and is to come" refers to Christ. He identified Himself at the very beginning of this book in just that way: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" ([Rev. 1:8](#)). He is identified for us, and therefore we do not need to speculate in places like this.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him
that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the
throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast
their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power:
for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and
were created [[Rev. 4:9-11](#)].

This is the first great worship scene which we see in heaven.

When should be whensoever, indicating that this is a continual act of worship. In other words, praise and adoration are the eternal activity of God's creatures in heaven. The creature worships the Creator as the triune God: "Holy, holy, holy." Worship is the activity of heaven.

I have a sermon which I have not preached in quite some while, which is entitled, "Why Do You Want to Go to Heaven?" Many people say that not everybody who is talking about heaven is going to heaven. The better question is, Why do you want to go to heaven? Is the idea to miss hell? I myself do not think that to be an unworthy motive, but may I say to you that if you go to heaven, you are going to find yourself either getting down on your face or getting up, worshiping the triune God and especially the Lord Jesus Christ. If you find worship boring down here and you are not interested in worshiping the Lord Jesus and expressing your heart's desire to Him, why in the world do you want to go to heaven? We are going to spend a lot of time up there worshiping Him.

"And cast their crowns before the throne." The crowns of the church are laid at Jesus' feet as an act of submission and worship. Many people talk of there being a crown for them over there. Frankly, if we get a crown at all, I think that after we wear it for awhile and the newness wears off, we are going to feel embarrassed. What in the world are we doing wearing a crown? The only One worthy up there is the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we are going to lay our crown at His feet.

"For thou hast created all things." Dr. Walvoord, in his very excellent book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, calls attention to something here that I think is important. The living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne. They worship Him for His attributes, because He is who He is. However, the four and twenty elders who represent the church worship Him not only because of His attributes, but also because of what He has done. Here they worship Him as Creator -- "thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." In other words, the church comes out of this little earth which is God's creation, and they join in the worship because He created this earth down here. [Genesis 1:1](#) is accurate, and the church believes it.

"And for thy pleasure they are and were created." "For thy pleasure" is more accurately translated "because of thy will." The reason that God created this earth and that things are as they are is because it was in His plan and purpose. I do not understand a great deal of what He is doing, and I do not understand a great deal about this universe in which I live, but I do know that it is created this way because this is the way He wanted it. He is in charge, and we are to worship Him because He created this little earth. I am glad that He did, and I am glad that He created me. He could have forgotten all about me, but I am glad that I was in the plan and purpose of God. We worship Him because of that.

Chapter 5

THEME: The church in heaven with Christ -- continued

Chapter 5 continues this scene of the church in heaven with Christ. I think it is well for us to spend a little time here to get acquainted with where we are going. I am sure that you would not buy real estate in Florida without seeing it first, although I had an uncle who did just that. After he went down and saw it, he reported that he had some of the finest alligators that he had ever seen -- all of his property was under water! He had bought it sight unseen. We have a lot of uninhabitable desert here in California, and even in the Hawaiian Islands there are great areas of nothing but a lava bed. You had better know what you are buying. Therefore, if you are going to heaven, you will want to know something about where you are going, and that is the reason this chapter ought to be interesting to you.

In chapters 4 -- 5 we find that the church (the body of believers) is in heaven with Christ. The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, ". . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#)). We are going to be with Him.

The scene of chapter 5 is set in heaven, preparatory to the events of the Great Tribulation. Since the church is in heaven with Him, it surely could not go through the Great Tribulation down here on the earth. The throne was the center of chapter 4. The Lion and the Lamb, both of whom represent Christ, are the center of chapter 5. Christ is the Lamb on the throne. He is both Sovereign and Savior. He is in full charge of all the events which follow in this book. Let us not lose sight of Him.

The Book With Seven Seals (5:1-4)

This chapter opens with and, a connective, a little conjunction, which indicates that something went before. It is the string that ties us back to chapter 4. Actually, we don't need a chapter division here because it is all the same subject.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals [[Rev. 5:1](#)].

Here is my translation of this verse:

And I saw on the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed (sealed tightly) with seven seals.

"I saw" -- John is the witness of these events; this is something that he sees. Someone pointed out to me in a letter sometime ago that I have the habit of saying, "Isn't this a wonderful picture?" or, "Isn't that a picture for you?" I wasn't aware that I use that expression as I teach, but I guess I do. I think that we ought to bring all our senses to bear upon the Word of God and especially in studying Revelation. John is seeing, and he is hearing. This is the reason that I frequently use slides to illustrate my sermons. I receive some criticism for that, but may I say to you, we need to see and hear a lot of things to aid our understanding of the Scriptures. The Word of God should grasp and lay hold of all of our senses, even of our taste and smell. For example, there are certain scenes in Revelation where you can smell the fire and brimstone.

God the Father holds here in His hand a scroll which is rolled tightly and sealed closely with seven seals. Stauffer is the one who calls our attention to the fact that the Roman law required that a will be sealed seven times, as illustrated in the wills left by Augustus and Vespasian. While it is interesting that this method was used, we know that in the Book of Revelation the number seven is not just an accidental number and that it wasn't used only because they used it in the Roman Empire.

Godet considers this scroll to be "the book of the new covenant." Others label it "the book of judgment." Walter Scott considered it "the revelation of God's purpose and counsel concerning the world." It perhaps should bear no title because it is, as Dr. Harry Ironside has suggested, the title deed to this world. You will remember that when the children of Israel were going into captivity, Jeremiah was instructed to have his servant go and buy some property and to get the title deed to it, because God promised that Israel was going to be returned to the land (see [Jer. 32:6-15](#)).

Who holds the title deed to this earth down here? It is none other than the Lord Jesus; He alone has it. In [Daniel 7:13-14](#) we read: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

This suggests, I believe, that what is being handed over to the Lord Jesus (we will see it handed over to Him) is the title deed to this world in which you and I live. He created it, He redeemed it, and it belongs to Him.

In Zechariah, which is a book that you need to know in order to know Revelation, we read: "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof is ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it" ([Zech. 5:1-3](#)).

This flying roll is the same thing as the scroll here in Revelation. Some think that the Ten Commandments are on this roll and that the world is to be judged by those commandments. I am not sure that that is it. Many suggestions have been made in an attempt to identify this book, but this is one place where we cannot be dogmatic.

The suggestion, which I consider to be more in line than any other, is that this book represents God's new covenant with Israel. God talks about this covenant a great deal. In Jeremiah we read, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" ([Jer. 31:31, 33](#)). Paul writes in Romans: "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" ([Rom. 11:26-27](#)).

In Hebrews we find these words: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" ([Heb. 10:16](#)). This is what Jeremiah had spoken of. The writer to the Hebrews continues: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" ([Heb. 10:17-18](#)).

The old covenant which God had made with Israel depended upon man. The Ten Commandments said, "Don't, don't, don't." It depended upon the weak arm of the flesh, and as a result, it failed. This was not because there was anything wrong with the Ten Commandments or with the Law that God gave. The problem was with man. The same thing occurred in the Garden of Eden. Many people think that there was something wrong with the forbidden fruit or that the tree was something unusual. I think it was good fruit and just like any other. The problem was not the fruit on the tree but the pear (pair) on the ground! This New Covenant depends upon the power of the throne of God; it depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? [[Rev. 5:2](#)].

Who has the right and title to this world? Who can rule it? Who can establish justice and righteousness? Do you think that maybe the Democrats can do it? Do you think that the Republicans can do it? Do you think that any administration can do it? Do you think the United Nations can do it? I trust that you are not so deluded at this late time in the history

of the world that you believe that man can solve his own problems. The Word of God makes it very clear that he cannot.

"A strong angel" means a powerful angel. He has "a loud voice." This is speaking now of power, that which is needed to make this covenant effective.

And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon [[Rev. 5:3](#)].

No man of Adam's line has a right to open the book and to take charge of this earth. There have been a great many who have tried to do it. Adam lost dominion through sin. Moses was the lawgiver, but he was also a lawbreaker. David and his line failed. None of Adam's line qualifies. There is none today. The Ruler must be a Redeemer, the Sovereign must be a Savior of mankind, and Jesus Christ is the only One. Stand aside, Adam, you cannot do it, and neither can any of your children. Satan is working at it, but he cannot do it either. The question is: Who is going to be able to do it?

And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon [[Rev. 5:4](#)].

John is disturbed by this a great deal. This man had a real passion for prophecy. He had a holy affection and a pious curiosity. He wanted to look into the things that even angels cannot look into. John enters into the drama because he has come from earth. The Revelation was written in tears. Is the earth to continue in sin and sorrow? Is there no future for the earth? Listen to what Paul has to say: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" ([Rom. 8:23](#)).

Is no one competent to rule this earth? John is overwhelmed by the possibility that there may be no one. Again Paul writes: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" ([Rom. 8:22](#)).

Personally, I believe that evolution is the most pessimistic philosophy and theory that anyone can entertain today. No wonder it has led to so many suicides among the intelligentsia. What hope is there for the future if it took millions of years to get to where we are today? Isn't there someone who can straighten out this problem? It is so petty and little and narrow-minded for politicians to say that they are going to make peace in our time. It is even more tragic to hear the church say that they can straighten out the affairs of the world or even that they can evangelize the world. My brother, may I say to you, there are just not any around who can qualify to open this book and to take charge of this earth that we are on. And John weeps a great deal because of this.

It is a good thing that this book was not opened here in Southern California because we have a whole passel of preachers who say that they can tell you what is on the inside of this book, on the outside, and all around it. They can even tell you what's on the cover! They have all the answers. If John had just been in California, instead of being on the island of Patmos, they could have given him the answers! Well, John didn't have the answer, but there will be One who can open the book, as we shall see.

Christ, The Lion And The Lamb (5:5-10)

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof [[Rev. 5:5](#)].

And one from among the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book, and the seven seals thereof.

Evidently, any one of the elders could have answered. They had spiritual illumination. I think that this further identifies them as the church because the Lord Jesus had said to His own: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" ([John 15:15](#)).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who has the right and title to this earth. He not only redeemed you and me, but He also redeemed the earth. He is identified in this section in all His ministries that relate to the earth.

"The Lion of the tribe of Juda" identifies Him, of course, with the tribe of Judah of the people of Israel. When old Jacob was dying, he called his twelve sons around him, and this is the prophecy he gave concerning Judah: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" ([Gen. 49:9-10](#)). The Lord Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is also "the Root of David." In [2Samuel 7](#), that great chapter of God's covenant with David, He says, "I am going to bring One in your line who shall rule, not only over these people, but over the whole earth." The Lord Jesus Christ has the right to rule, as He is the fulfillment of the prophecies made in the Old Testament relative to the future of the world. All of those prophecies will be fulfilled at His second coming to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth [[Rev. 5:6](#)].

John is still a spectator to this scene. He says, "I beheld, I saw this."

"A Lamb" -- the word there is in the diminutive; literally, it means a little lamb. This denotes its gentleness and its willingness to be sacrificed. Christ was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He did not open His mouth at all (see [Isa. 53:7](#)). He was the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world (see [John 1:29](#)).

"As it had been slain" indicates the redemptive and vicarious, substitutionary death of Christ. The emphasis is upon the fact that He was slain with violence.

"Stood" should rather be "standing." This speaks of His resurrection. He is no longer seated at the right hand of God. He is moving now, and He is moving to power. He is coming to this earth. The judgment of the Tribulation is about to strike the earth. The winds are already blowing on the earth.

"In the midst of the throne" is indicative of the fact that He is before the throne and ready to act as the righteous Judge.

"Seven horns" denotes complete power. A horn speaks of power (see [Dan. 7](#) -- [Dan. 8](#)). He is omnipotent. "Seven eyes" denotes complete knowledge. Christ is omniscient. He is the omnipotent and omniscient God. He moves in the fullness of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a Lion and a Lamb. The lion character refers to His second coming; the lamb character refers to His first coming. The lion is symbolic of His majesty; the lamb is symbolic of His meekness. As a lion He is a Sovereign; as a lamb He is a Savior. As a lion He is a Judge; as a lamb He is judged. The lion represents the government of God; the lamb represents the grace of God.

And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne [[Rev. 5:7](#)].

"Took" is correctly "hath taken." The Lord Jesus moves to the throne through the Tribulation Period. He judges the world in righteousness before He reigns in righteousness. He is no longer the intercessor of the church, for the church is now with Him. He is beginning to act as Judge. The movement here is important.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints [[Rev. 5:8](#)].

"When he had taken [took] the book" is in the aorist tense, meaning completed action. This is the great movement of all creation, and the Lord Jesus takes over now.

Notice the worship of the Lamb by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. "Harps" denote praise. The elders do not play on the harps; they are just a token of praise to God. I am so glad to have found out that I am not going to be an angel playing on a harp in heaven -- that just doesn't appeal to me! You may want a harp, and if you want one, I guess in heaven they will get one for you, but I am thankful that I don't have to have one.

The twenty-four elders act as priests. Only the church is a priesthood of believers in heaven. Dr. Carl Armerding gives the arresting thought that the prayer of Christ for believers in [John 17](#) is answered in the elders: our Lord's prayer that they might know Him, that they might be with Him, and that they might behold His glory is all answered in this scene of the elders in heaven.

The "vials full of odours" is more accurately "bowls full of incense." These are identified as "the prayers of saints." Obviously, the elders represent the body of Christ, which is called the church and they are the priesthood.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth [[Rev. 5:9-10](#)].

And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book and to open the seals of it: for thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God in thy blood [men] of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and madest them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign on the earth.

"They" indicates that both the living creatures and the elders sing this song. The angelic hosts join the church in praise.

"Sing" (present tense) denotes the continuation of praise. Praise is directed to the Lamb with the book. He is praised now as the Redeemer of men in all ages and races. In heaven is going to be the first time that I will sing. I have never been able to sing, but I am going to be in that chorus, and I am going to sing praises unto Him.

The "new song" is the song of redemption. The old song is the song of creation. In the Book of Job we are told that the sons of God sang. They were singing because God was the Creator; they didn't really know anything about the love of God then. Now we can sing about our Savior who loves us and who gave Himself for us. What a picture we have here!

"Worthy" reveals that He now fills the entire horizon of praise and worship. Actually, worship is returning to worth, that which belongs to Him; and He is the only One worthy of praise.

"And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." They sing of His shed blood in heaven. Down here many denominational churches are taking out of their hymn books all references to His blood, but in heaven they will be put back in the hymn book. I guess that may be the reason the Lord isn't going to embarrass some of those folk by taking them into heaven, because they would have to sing about the blood there.

The change of the pronoun from "us" to "them" is important. They are praising the Lamb for those yet to be saved on the earth -- the tribulation saints.

"A kingdom and priests" refers to the tribulation saints. The church will not reign on the earth, but over the earth.

Myriads Of Angels Join The Song (5:11-12)

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing [[Rev. 5:11-12](#)].

And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousands of ten thousands (myriads), and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb

that hath been slain to take the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

When John says, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," I think that he means they were innumerable. In effect John says, "At first I looked and I saw a company of angels around the elders, and they were singing -- and I thought that was great. But all of a sudden I looked out yonder and, boy, there was a crowd which I could not count!" Nobody could have counted them. A computer couldn't count them. God's created intelligences were praising Him. My friend, I do not know why you want to go to heaven if you do not want to worship and praise Him down here.

Universal Worship Of The Savior And Sovereign (5:13-14)

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever [[Rev. 5:13-14](#)].

Every animate creature of God joins in this universal act of worship, both in heaven and earth. Evidently, the animals in the earth and the fish in the sea join in this volume of praise! The living creatures add their amen to it, and the church falls down in silent adoration and praise.

If I could, I would sing the Hallelujah Chorus, for as we come to the end of this very remarkable scene in heaven, we see that all praise and honor and worship must go to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not in the habit of praising and worshiping Him, why don't you start right now?

Chapter 6

THEME: Opening of the first six seals

The sixth chapter of Revelation is the great watershed, the great divide, of the Book of Revelation. Here is a division that is all-important. Traveling on Highway 66 across northern New Mexico, you go through Albuquerque, then Gallup, to Winslow, Arizona, and up to Flagstaff. Somewhere in that area there is a place called the Continental Divide. I am told that you could drop a chip in a stream which is flowing on the west side of the divide, and it would end up in the Pacific Ocean, or you could put a chip in a stream on the east side of the divide, and it would eventually end up in the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Gulf of Mexico. This is a very important division which separates those two chips so that they find themselves worlds apart. We have such a great divide at chapter 6 of the Book of Revelation.

The third and final major division of Revelation began with chapter 4 where we found ourselves transferred to heaven. John was caught up to heaven, and we went right up with him and began to see things in heaven. However, we did not see anything labeled the

church, because the church was the name given to it down here on the earth. But we did see the twenty-four elders. The elders had to get there some way -- they were caught up, and they represent the church which will be at this time in heaven with Christ. From here on in the Book of Revelation, the church is no longer mentioned on the earth at all. There is an invitation at the end of the book which comes from the church, but that refers to this day in which we live.

You can see an orderly process in the Book of Revelation, and we need to follow Peter's rule for prophecy: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" ([2Pet. 1:20](#)) -- that is, you do not interpret any prophecy by itself. Each prophecy must be looked at as a part of a system and a program, and it must fit in with the others. By the time we get to the sixth chapter, a great many forget that John gave to us an orderly division of the Book of Revelation. John was told in [Revelation 1:19](#), "Write [1] the things which thou hast seen" -- that was that glorious vision of the glorified Christ as the Great High Priest amidst the lampstands, where He is keeping the light burning here upon the earth. [2] ". . . And the things which are" -- that was the seven churches which represent the total earthly experience of the church from the Day of Pentecost to the parousia, from the Upper Room to the upper air, the total history of the church on earth. [3] ". . . And the things which shall be hereafter [meta tauta]." The earthly career of the church was ended in chapter 3. John said meta tauta, after these things, twice at the opening of chapter 4. He did that for the benefit of those who hold the historic viewpoint of Revelation, the amillennialists. Beginning, therefore, with chapter 4, John is showing us "the things which must be hereafter."

In chapters 4 -- 5, we were in heaven with John. The first thing that we saw was a throne, and the Lord Jesus was there. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who is sitting at God's right hand, waiting until His enemies are to be made His footstool down here. He is also the Lamb, and we saw the emphasis upon His first coming. The Lamb, because He is the Redeemer, is the One who is able to take the seven-sealed book, which is the title deed of this earth.

Do you know that the Lord Jesus is the only One who is able to judge this earth? He is the One who is able to judge, not only because of who He is -- He is God manifest in the flesh -- but also because of what He has done. He created this earth, and that gives Him a right. He is worshiped in chapter 4 as the Creator. But then He also redeemed this earth, and in chapter 5 He is worshiped as the Redeemer. Since He is the Creator and the Redeemer, He is the only One worthy to judge this earth. He is the only One who is able to rule this earth. What a reflection upon the consummate conceit of little men down here who want to be judges! What right has the Supreme Court to judge anyone? What right has the Senate or the House of Representatives or the president to judge anyone? Who do they think they are? May I say to you, the Lord Jesus Christ alone is worthy to sit in judgment. Until one of these men can measure up to Him, he is not really in a position to judge in his own ability and strength. Any human judge who does not look to God is not worthy to sit on any bench and judge anyone. The injustice that is upon this earth today is brought about by little man sitting in judgment upon others. Jesus Christ is worthy. That is the picture that is given to us at the close of chapter 5.

Opening Of The Seven-sealed Book (6:1)

As we come to chapter 6, the scene shifts to the earth, and the question naturally is: What happens on the earth when the church leaves? The Great Tribulation takes place, and that is the subject of chapters 6 -- 18. The opening of the seven-sealed book is the subject specifically of chapter 6 through [verse 1](#) of chapter 8. These seven seals open up the Great Tribulation period. The Lord Jesus breaks the seals, and the four horses ride forth. We will see the martyred dead during that period and the coming of the day of wrath. In a very orderly way, the seventh seal introduces the blowing of seven trumpets (see [Rev. 8:2](#) -- [Rev. 11:19](#)). The blowing of the seventh trumpet introduces seven startling persons (see [Rev. 12](#) -- [Rev. 13](#)). The beast out of the sea introduces the seven bowls of wrath (see [Rev. 15](#) -- [Rev. 16](#)). The last bowl of wrath brings to us the burden, or the judgment, of Babylon, and that brings to an end the Great Tribulation period (see [Rev. 17](#) -- 18), and then Christ comes to the earth.

It is interesting to note that upon Babylon are the first and the last judgments. Babylon, at the Tower of Babel, represents the first organized rebellion against God (see [Gen. 11:1-9](#)). Babylon also represents the last rebellion against God, both religiously (see [Rev. 17](#)) and politically (see [Rev. 18](#)). This brings to an end man's little day on this earth.

The important thing for us to keep before us is the One who is worthy to open this book. He is directing everything now. As we were told at the beginning, this is the Revelation, the unveiling, of Jesus Christ. He is no longer walking among the lampstands, for they have all been removed from this earth. He is no longer the High Priest, standing as intercessor, but He is now the executor of God's will upon the earth as He opens the seals of the book. All the judgments of the Great Tribulation usher forth from the seals out of which come the trumpets, the persons, and the bowls.

The Great Tribulation is triggered from heaven. Jesus Christ directs the entire operation. This is the reason that [Psalm 2:9](#) says, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. . . ." Many will say that they don't like all this. Do you have a better suggestion as to how He should put down the rebellion on this earth? If you do, would you pass it on to the Lord Jesus? How do you think He should put it down? Suppose He came like He did more than nineteen hundred years ago. Do you think they are ready in Moscow, in the Kremlin, to turn authority over to Him? How about in any other country? How about in our country? I'm telling you, they are not about to turn it over to Him in Washington, D.C. Neither of our political parties is interested in putting Jesus Christ on the throne. They have some very unworthy men on both sides who would like to be on the throne. My friend, may I say to you that He alone is the One who is worthy. And how is He going to come to power? Exactly as the second psalm says: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." We are going to see that taking place from now on in the Book of Revelation -- this is judgment on the earth.

The church will be delivered from this period of judgment. Why? Is it because they are such nice, sweet, Sunday school children? Oh, no. They are sinners, but they are saved by the grace of God. Only those who reject the grace of God go into the Great Tribulation period. This is my reason for believing that God has raised up the medium of radio in our day to get the Word of God out to the ends of the earth. He is going to let them all hear the gospel, and when they make their decision, that will decide whether or not they are going into the Great Tribulation.

Chapters 4 -- 5 were but the preparation for that which was to follow -- the judgment of the earth. In chapter 4 we saw the throne and the triune God; in chapter 5 we saw the book and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are certain factors that are brought into focus which increase the intensity and the ferocity of the Great Tribulation:

1. The Holy Spirit will restrain evil no longer. Do I mean that He will leave the world? No, He won't leave. He was in the world before the Day of Pentecost, but on the Day of Pentecost He assumed a new ministry of baptizing believers into the body of Christ, a ministry of indwelling them, of filling them, and of leading and guiding them in this world. He will take the church out of this world, but that does not mean that He is going to leave. He will still be here, but He will not restrain evil any longer. In other words, man is going to have his little day during that period, and so is Satan. This is the reason I don't want to be here.
2. The true church, as light and salt, will be gone from the earth. Although the church has very little influence in the world today, it still has a little, but when it leaves the earth, there will be none left.
3. The Devil knows that he has but a short time. He is going to make hay while the sun shines. He is going to take advantage of it during this period, and God is going to give him free rein.
4. Evil men will be free to carry out their nefarious plans. In other words, Antichrist will be able to take over this earth for a brief period of time.
5. There will be direct judgment from God. We see that here in [v. 17](#), which says, "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

I do not think that the Great Tribulation breaks suddenly like a great tornado. The opening of the seals is gradual, logical, chronological. They are opened one at a time. The Book of Revelation makes sense, my friend.

As we come to the text of this chapter, may I make the statement very carefully that, from chapter 4 on, this is speaking of the future. Now if it is future and if we today are in the time of "the things which are," the period of the church, we cannot drag any of the seals, the trumpets, the bowls, or the persons up into our own day. I do believe we are seeing the setting of the stage, but I do not think that any of these things are taking place today. Yet we find that a great many persons are interpreting this section in just that way. It is sensationalism, of course, and I guess it gets listeners and sells books, but it surely isn't according to the way John put it down here. I simply want to lay it down as an axiom that from chapter 6 on it has reference to the future, and none of these things has come to pass as yet.

The section of Revelation which deals with the seven churches could be fitted into history, but you cannot fit any of this which follows into history. The difference between the two great systems of interpreting prophecy -- the futurist and the historic viewpoints - - really become manifest at this point in Revelation. The historical theory takes the

position that all of this is history and can be fitted into history. It is quite interesting that many who hold the historical viewpoint assume that this is future from here on, or a little farther down they make it future -- in other words, they just can't fit it into history. The amillennialist tends to fit everything from here on into history. As a result, there are about fifty different systems of interpretation, according to Dr. Walvoord, that have come out of the historical viewpoint. My friend, forty-nine of those are bound to be wrong, and personally, I think the other one is also wrong!

I went to a seminary that was amillennial, where they attempted to fit the rest of Revelation into the historical, or the amillennial, viewpoint. It became ridiculous and even comical at times. For example, when we reached the place where Scripture says that Satan was put into the bottomless pit, we were taught that that has already taken place. I asked the professor, "How do you explain the satanic activity that is taking place today?" He replied, "Satan is chained, but he has a long chain on him. It is like when you take a cow out into a vacant lot and tether her out on a long rope and let her graze." That was his explanation! And my comment was, "Doctor, I think Satan's got a pretty long chain on him then, because he is able to graze all over the world today!" It really makes some Scriptures seem rather ridiculous when you follow the historical viewpoint.

May I say very definitely that John has made it clear that we have now come to future things, and anything from here on through chapter 20 is still future. We are following a chronological order here, and it is very logical. You simply cannot say that these events are taking place today, and you cannot fit them into history.

Opening Of The First Seal -- Rider On A White Horse (6:1-2)

The Lord Jesus Christ takes the seven-sealed book, and He breaks the first seal.

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer [[Rev. 6:1-2](#)].

Here is my own translation of these verses:

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as a sound of thunder, Go. And I saw, and behold a white horse, and one sitting on him having a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering, and to conquer.

Christ is going to break all the seals, ad seriatum, right in order. He is in full charge, and every creature in heaven is moving at His command. So the four horsemen are now going to ride forth. He breaks the seal, and says, "Go." Although the King James Version gives the impression that an invitation is given to John to "Come and see," the phrase "and see" should be omitted, and since the order issues from heaven, the proper translation is "Go."

It is restated by John that he "saw" and he "heard." This is television that we are looking at.

Attempts to determine the symbolism of the rider on the white horse has given rise to many differences in opinion. The preponderate interpretation among commentators is that he represents Christ. They use [Psalm 45](#) and [Revelation 19](#) in support of their position. But most of the contemporary Bible expositors of the premillennial school say that the white horse and the rider is Antichrist. That is the position of Scott, Ironside, Chafer, Walvoord, Woodbridge and Pentecost. And it happens to be my position also. It would be pretty difficult for the Lord Jesus, who is the one opening the seals, now to make a quick change, mount a horse, and come riding forth.

To me that would be a rather inconsistent and unbelievable position. I personally take the viewpoint that this is Antichrist, this is an imitation of Christ, this is one who pretends to be Christ, who comes forth.

We are moving today in the direction of a world dictator. More and more is this true. All the nations of the world are disturbed. Lawlessness abounds, and governments are not able to control as they should. This is all preparing the way for the coming of one who is going to rule.

Antichrist does not appear as a villain. After all, Satan's angels are angels of light. He is not going to have horns or cloven feet. Rather, he is going to be the most attractive man the world has ever seen. They will elect him, and the world will acclaim him because he has come in his own name. But when he takes over, it sure is going to be bad for the world.

This is not just the ravings of a preacher here in California. This is something that other men in other walks of life, who apparently make no great claims to being Christians, have said. Professor A. J. Toynbee, Director of Studies in the Royal Institute of International Affairs, said:

By forcing on mankind more and more lethal weapons and at the same time making the whole world more and more interdependent economically, technology has brought mankind to such a degree of distress that we are ripe for deifying any new Caesar who might succeed in giving the world unity and peace.

That will be the platform that Antichrist will come in on -- world unity and peace. I think that if anybody appeared on the scene now and offered the world that, the world wouldn't ask whether he came from heaven or hell. I don't think they would care, because they want peace at any price, and we have spent billions of dollars trying to obtain it.

G. K. Chesterton observed in his day: "One of the paradoxes of this age is that it is the age of Pacifism, but not the age of Peace." There is a great deal of talking about peace.

In a news item sometime ago, we read of a woman in Fayetteville, Arkansas, who named the United Nations as the beneficiary to her \$700,000 estate "in the fervent hope that this relatively small contribution may be of some effect in bringing about universal peace on earth and good will among men." I want to say that she poured that money down a rat hole, because you are not going to buy peace with \$700,000 or even millions of dollars. We have given away billions of dollars throughout the world, and we do not have peace.

The Ford Foundation, one of the world's wealthiest private organizations, has announced that their money eventually will be used to work for world peace and better government, living and education conditions -- yet the world gets worse all the time.

When Antichrist comes to power, he is going to talk peace, and the world will think that it is entering the Millennium when it is actually entering the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation comes in like a lamb, but it goes out like a lion. A promise of peace is the big lie the world is going to believe.

This rider could not be Christ, therefore, in view of the fact that Christ is the Lamb in the midst of the throne who, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is directing these events from heaven and is giving the orders to the four horsemen to ride. Christ is clearly identified in [Revelation 19](#), while here the identity is certainly obscure, which suggests that it is not Christ but an imitation of Him.

Opening Of The Second Seal -- Rider On A Red Horse (6:3-4)

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword [[Rev. 6:3-4](#)].

And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Go. And another horse, fiery red (flame colored) went out. And there was given to the one sitting on him to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill (violently) one another, and there was given to him a great sword.

The first horseman could not be Christ, because when He brings peace to this earth, it is going to be permanent. This is a short-lived peace. Immediately after the white horse went forth, here comes the red horse of war on the earth. The peace which the rider on the white horse brought to the earth was temporary and counterfeit. The Antichrist presents himself as a ruler who brings peace to the world, but he cannot guarantee it, for God says, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" ([Isa. 57:21](#)). And that passage of Scripture certainly has been fulfilled.

Isn't peace exactly what every candidate for office in our country has promised? Certainly that has been true in my lifetime. I never shall forget the candidate who said that our boys would never again go across the ocean to fight. What baloney that was! We were promised peace, and every candidate since then has promised peace. One of them dropped two atom bombs, and immediately afterward we began to talk about peace. Every candidate since then -- no exception and regardless of party -- has said he was going to bring peace. My friend, we are as far from peace today as we have ever been. Already the clouds are gathering for World War III.

Antichrist will be a phony. He won't bring peace because here goes the fiery red horse of war riding throughout the earth again. And this is going to be a real world war. Don't say that this has been fulfilled -- it hasn't been. It is future.

Opening Of The Third Seal -- Rider On A Black Horse (6:5-6)

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine [[Rev. 6:5-6](#)].

And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Go. And I saw, and behold a black horse, and the one sitting on him having a balance (scales) in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, a choenix (a quart) of wheat for a denarius, and three choenix (quarts) of barley for a denarius; and do not hurt the oil and the wine.

John again says, "I heard" and "I saw." He just wants to make sure that we know that. The color of the black horse indicates mourning (see [Jer. 4:28](#); [Mal. 3:14](#), "mournfully in black"), and it also speaks of famine. In [Lamentations 4:8-9](#) we read: "Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field."

The black horse represents the worldwide famine that is to come on the earth. Always after a war there is a shortage of foodstuff.

The Greek historian Herodotus says that a choenix (quart) of corn was a soldier's daily supply of food. A denarius was a day's wage (see [Matt. 20:2](#)). Therefore, a working man will be unable to support his family in that day.

The oil and the wine are luxuries that are enjoyed by the rich. Oil would correspond to our toiletries, the beauty aids and the body conditioners that we use today; that is, the luxuries of life. The wine corresponds to the liquor that will be in abundance. Isn't it interesting that there will not be enough foodstuff, not enough barley for food, but there will be enough barley to make liquor! They will make it in that day, and the rich are the ones who will get it.

Let me be very frank. During World War II the rich, for the most part, were able to get meat. They were able to get the luxuries of life. A very wealthy man told me that he never missed getting a big T-bone steak anytime that he wanted it. But I can remember getting very tired of eating tongue, which was one thing we didn't have to have blue chips to get and was something that was not rationed. In this day that is coming, things won't change. The rich are going to get theirs, but the poor won't be able to get theirs. That is the way it has always been. I feel like saying, "Ho hum," when I hear these sincere egg-headed boys talking about how they are going to work out the poverty problem. All that it has accomplished is that it has given a good job to a lot of them, but so far it hasn't filtered down and been a blessing to the poor. It has never helped the poor to lift themselves up with any degree of pride. Why? Because the only Man who can lift up the poor is Jesus Christ. None of these egg-headed boys is able to do it. I am sorry to have to

say that, but somebody needs to speak out against all of this tomfoolery that our government is going through. All that this wasteful spending of money does is to create more bureaucracy and to sap our tax dollars. This is the sort of thing that is abroad today, but just think what it is going to be like in that future day. This which we are talking about in the Revelation is future. The only reason that I make application to today is to show that this is not unreasonable; it is going to take place.

Way back in 1798, the Rev. Thomas Malthus concluded that "the power of population is infinitely greater than the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man." His prediction had little weight in his day. In 1959 the United Nations' seventy-seven-nation Food and Agriculture Organization met in Rome to talk about "the fight against hunger and malnutrition." At this meeting Toynbee declared: "Sooner or later food production will reach its limit. And then, if population is still increasing, famine will do the execution that was done in the past by famine, pestilence and war combined." Sir John Boyd Orr, at one time the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, warned, "I shall finish my office by giving a last warning to the world. If it is not solved there will be world chaos in the next fifty years. The nations of the world are insane." Someone has reported, "There are today 750 million people getting hungrier in countries bordering the Communist sphere." This thing is growing, my friend. Famine always follows war.

Opening Of The Fourth Seal -- Rider On A Pale Horse (6:7-8)

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth
[Rev. 6:7-8].

And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Go. And I looked and behold a pale (greenish-yellow) horse; and the one sitting upon him, Death was his name; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with death (pestilence), and by the (wild) beasts of the earth.

Here is a pestilence that is going to take out one-fourth of the population of the earth. There will not be enough antibiotics and penicillin to go around in that day to stop it.

"Death was his name." Death is no more personalized here than is war -- although the rider is given the name of death. There is more involved in physical death than meets the eye, for the human being is more than physical, and death is more than cessation of physical activity. While death takes the body, Hades is the place where the spirit of a lost man goes (see [Luke 16:23](#), ASV).

A literal translation of [Romans 5:14](#) reads thus: "And nevertheless death became king from Adam down to Moses, even over them who did not sin after the fashion of Adam's

sin [transgression] who is the type of Him [The Adam] who was to come (The Coming One)."

"Death was his name; and Hades followed with him." The word for hades is sometimes unfortunately translated by the word hell as in [Luke 16:23](#) where, speaking of the rich man and Lazarus, we read: "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Hell is a very unfortunate translation there; it is this same word hades, and actually, it does not refer to hell at all. It speaks of physical death -- either where the spirit goes or of the grave where the body is placed. In other words, while death takes the body, hades is the place where the spirit of a lost man goes. The Lord Jesus spoke of it in that way.

Paul personifies death in [Romans 5:14](#), as he does sin in that same section, and he does it for emphasis. Sin and death entered the world at the same time. Death is the result of sin. During the interval from Adam to Moses, men did not commit the same sin as did Adam, nor was their sinning a transgression of a law, as was Adam's, because the Ten Commandments had not been given. Yet it was a period when men sinned and died. Adam's sin became their sin, for they died as Adam died. Even babies died in the Flood.

Death evidently has an all-inclusive, three-fold meaning that we do not ordinarily attach to it. We think of death as referring only to the body. (1) This is physical death, and it refers only to the body. It comes to a man because of Adam's sin. (2) Then there is what is known as spiritual death, which is separation from, and rebellion against, God. We inherit a dead nature from Adam; that is, we have no capacity for God and no desire for Him at all. (3) Finally, there is eternal death, which is eternal separation from God. Unless a man is redeemed, this inevitably follows. This is the second death that we will find later on in chapter 20, [verse 14](#).

Before Adam sinned, God said to him, ". . . for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Well, Adam lived physically for more than nine hundred years after that, but he was dead spiritually to God. He ran from God. He no longer had a desire for fellowship with God. He died spiritually, and physical death followed and has come into the human family. More and more it deteriorates mankind. Most of us are being propped up today by modern medicine and the marvelous developments of science in order to stay alive. Actually, the human race is deteriorating all the time. Human life would be much shorter than it is if it were not for all the modern gadgets which keep us alive down here.

Adam is definitely declared here to be a type of Christ. Death must be laid at Adam's door as his total responsibility. You see, God did not create man to die. It was a penalty imposed because Adam transgressed God's command. Because Adam is the federal head of our race, his transgression is our transgression, and his death is our death. Now Christ is the head of a new creation, and this new creation has life only in Christ. He alone can give life. He is totally responsible for the life and eternal bliss of those who are His own.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer put it like this, and this is a theological statement:

Thus spiritual death comes mediately through an unbroken line of posterity. Over against this, physical death is received from Adam immediately, as each person dies in body because of his own personal share in Adam's first sin.

During the Great Tribulation, death will ride unbridled. The Lord Jesus put it like this: "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" ([Matt. 24:22](#)).

At the Great White Throne judgment, death will be finally destroyed (see [Rev. 20:14](#)). This is confirmed by Paul who writes, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" ([1Cor. 15:26](#)). And John reasserts it in [Revelation 21:4](#): "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts will decimate this earth's population by one-fourth. This is something that, through His prophet Ezekiel, God had said would come: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?" ([Ezek. 14:21](#)).

The pale horse represents plague and pestilence that will stalk the earth. It also encompasses the possibility of germ warfare. Dr. Frank Holtman, head of the University of Tennessee's bacteriological department, said, "While the greater part of a city's population could be destroyed by an atomic bomb, the bacteria method might easily wipe out the entire population within a week."

We have seen the riding of the four horsemen, and this follows exactly the pattern that the Lord Jesus gave while He was on the earth. In [Matthew 24:5-8](#), in the Olivet Discourse, He said: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many [the white horse]. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars [the red horse]: see that ye be not troubled: for all these must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines [the black horse], and pestilences [the pale horse], and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." This is the opening of the Great Tribulation.

Opening Of The Fifth Seal -- Prayer Of The Martyred Remnant (6:9-11)

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? [[Rev. 6:9-10](#)].

And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar of burnt sacrifice the souls [Gr.: psuchas] of those slain on account of the Word of God, and on account of the witness which they had; and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long (until when) O

Master, the Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth (earth dwellers)?

This altar is in heaven and is evidently where Christ offered His blood for the sins of the world. I take the position that His literal blood is in heaven. Let me confirm that with [Hebrews 9:23-24](#) which says: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The souls mentioned here are the Old Testament saints. As the Lord Jesus put it: "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation" ([Luke 11:50-51](#)).

Included with these are those who will be slain in the Great Tribulation period, as we have already found that one-fourth of the population will be wiped out. They are resting on solid Old Testament ground as they plead for justice on the basis of God's holy law.

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled [[Rev. 6:11](#)].

My translation of this verse is:

And there was given to them to each one a white robe; and it was said to them, that they should rest (in peace) yet for a little time until their fellow servants also, and their brethren who should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

In other words, the Tribulation saints are to be included with the Old Testament saints in the second resurrection.

Opening Of The Sixth Seal -- The Day Of Wrath Has Come (6:12-17)

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind [[Rev. 6:12-13](#)].

And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell into the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind.

This is evidently the beginning of the last half of the Great Tribulation period. The great day of His wrath is before us. The Great Tribulation opens and closes with these upheavals in the natural universe: (1) The beginning of the Tribulation (compare [Joel 2:30-31](#) with [Acts 2:20](#)) and (2) the end of the Tribulation (see [Joel 3:9-17](#); [Isa. 13:9-13](#); [Isa. 34:1-4](#); [Matt. 24:29](#)).

The fact that we are having an increase in earthquakes today is no fulfillment of this at all. This is to take place in the Great Tribulation period. But the interesting thing is that in the past earthquakes have really destroyed a great deal of the population of this earth. Professor R. A. Daley, in his book *Our Mobile Earth*, has written this:

In the last 4,000 years earthquakes have caused the loss of 13,000,000 lives, and by far the most awful earthshock is yet to come. "And there was a great earthquake, such as there was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty; and the cities of the nations fell" ([Rev. 16:18](#)).

What a picture we have here! The earthquakes today are not a fulfillment. They merely show that it could happen as God's Word says it will.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places [[Rev. 6:14](#)].

Here is my translation:

And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

I think that this verse is to be taken quite literally. We see the same thing in [Nahum 1:5](#) and again in chapter 20, [verse 11](#).

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? [[Rev. 6:15-17](#)].

And the kings of the earth and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and free man hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains. And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the Great Day of their wrath came, and who is able to stand?

There are those on the earth who are praying to the rocks and to the mountains to fall upon them, because they want to be hidden. Hidden from whom? From the wrath of the Lamb. This is the great day of the wrath of God.

"The wrath of the Lamb" is a paradoxical phrase. The wrath of God is the Day of the Lord, that day that is spoken of all the way through the Old Testament prophets, a day that is coming upon the earth and is yet future. It is called here "the wrath of the Lamb" -- that is a strange statement.

The Bible is filled with paradoxes, and I am sure that you have discovered that. A paradox is a proposition which is contrary to received opinion; that is, it is that which is seemingly contradictory. On the surface the assertion seems contradictory, but closer examination reveals it is factual. For example, here are several paradoxes. The farther an object goes from you, the larger it gets. That is not true, but it is true. When a balloon goes up, it gets smaller to the eye, but the balloon is getting larger all the time as the atmosphere gets thinner. Another paradox is that water flows uphill in Sequoia National Park. You may not believe that, but there are tons of water flowing uphill there. The Sequoia National Park is filled with giant redwood trees, and those redwoods are pulling up tons of water all the time. They call it osmosis, which is a scientific word which means they don't really know what is happening. A third paradox is that the closer you get to the sun, the hotter it is. But out in the Hawaiian Islands, a tropical climate, if you look up on the top of Mauna Kea, there is snow up there although it is closer to the sun than you are. May I say to you, there are a lot of paradoxes that are true.

Here we have "the wrath of the Lamb." The lamb is a familiar figure of Christ. Suppose a little lamb, which is noted for gentleness and meekness, did get angry? What then? It is like a tempest in a teapot. From the days of Abel to those of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus is depicted as a lamb. The apostle John calls Him "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" ([Rev. 13:8](#)). In other words, God did not choose the lamb because it possessed characteristics of Christ, neither did He choose it for the sacrificial aspect. God created such an animal to represent Christ. Christ is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, before any lamb was ever created.

The Lord Jesus Christ has the qualities of a lamb. He was meek -- "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" ([Matt. 11:28-29](#)). He was gentle -- ". . . Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" ([Mark 10:14](#)). He was harmless -- You never see a sign saying, "Beware of the lamb." You see "Beware of the dog," but not of the lamb. He was humble -- Christ washed the feet of His disciples. This is a tremendous thing. He is One whose life was marked by winsomeness. His life was like the perfume of a lovely and fragile flower. His coming was a doxology. His stay was a blessing. His departure was a benediction. Even the unbelieving world has been fascinated by His life. The lamb sets forth His sacrifice. Abraham said, ". . . God will provide himself a lamb . . ." ([Gen. 22:8](#)), and God did provide Himself a Lamb.

But what about "the wrath"? Wrath is strange and foreign even to the person of God, is it not? God loves the good. God hates the evil. He does not hate as you and I hate. He is not vindictive. God is righteous, God is holy, and He hates that which is contrary to Himself. He says that Jehovah is a man of war. He is strong and mighty. He is mighty in battle. The gospel reveals the wrath of God. Paul said, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in

unrighteousness" ([Rom. 1:18](#)). Look at this world we are in, my friend. It already reveals the wrath of God, the judgment of God.

It is like mixing fire and water to bring wrath and the Lamb together, but all the fury of the wrath of God is revealed in the Lamb. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He made a scourge of small cords, and He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. Was He bluffing? He was not. He called the religious rulers a generation of vipers, whited sepulchres. He cursed the fig tree. He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin and Bethsaida" (see [Matt. 11:21](#)). Christ rejected Jerusalem, but He had tears in His eyes when He did so. He still controls the forces of nature, and He uses them in judgment. God has declared war against sin. I say, Blessed be His name. He will not compromise with that which has brought such havoc to the human family! There is a day coming when the wrath of the Lamb will be revealed. Somebody says, "I thought He was gentle and would not punish sin." My friend, God said, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" ([Ps. 2:10-12](#)).

Chapter 7

THEME: God seals a remnant of Israel and saves a redeemed company of Gentiles

The Book of Revelation has been labeled a book difficult to understand. Some folk say that it is just a mumbo jumbo of a great many visions which are out of this world and which no one can understand. It is my conviction that this book is very logical and is divided in a very simple manner which no one can miss. If we get bogged down in some passage and try to take symbols and juggle them to fit into any system that we might choose, then we are going to be in real trouble. Rather, we should just let John tell us where we are as we go along. We are now in a section that the Lord Jesus labeled the Great Tribulation. This period takes place after the church leaves the earth, after the church concludes its mission and is taken to be with the Lord. I think that this is not only a reasonable conclusion, but I personally feel it is very clear, not only here, but elsewhere in Scripture.

Peter said that ". . . no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" ([2Pet. 1:20](#)). In other words, you cannot lift out just one verse here or there or even consider only the Book of Revelation and expect to interpret accurately the whole of prophecy. It is essential to recognize that the Book of Revelation happens to be the last book of the Bible. When you are studying arithmetic in school, you begin with "two plus two equals four." You do not start the little ones in first grade with atomic physics or with higher mathematics. Since this book is the last book of the Bible, the only requirement is to have a working knowledge of the sixty-five books which go before. Then you will find that this book makes a great deal of sense and is quite logical.

John is going into detail now concerning the Great Tribulation period, a period that has not been elaborated upon in any other place in Scripture except in the Olivet Discourse which the Lord Jesus gave (see [Matt. 24-25](#)). John is merely widening that out and giving us additional information. What he says is based on what the Lord Jesus had to say.

In chapter 6 we saw the opening of the seven seals; actually, we have had the opening of only six seals so far. These six seals revealed the four great tragedies that are coming upon the earth, the beginning of the judgments. The fifth seal let us look at a martyred company of people, a great throng. In the sixth seal we were introduced to some of the signs of the doom that is to come upon a godless world in the Great Tribulation period.

In this period the church is never mentioned by name. The reason it is never mentioned by name is because John is recording things on earth, and at this particular time the church is not on earth. John was told to write the things he had seen, and he saw the vision of the glorified Christ. Then he was to write about "the things which are." He was in the church period, and we are still in it today. Since the church is still in the world, we are in the period of "the things which are." The church was the theme of [Revelation 2](#) and [Revelation 3](#); the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamum, the church in Thyatira, etc. But in the chapter before us there is no talking to the church because the church is not here on earth. We saw in chapters 4-5 that the church was in heaven -- that is where the church will go at the time of the Rapture. I will deal later with the reason why the church cannot go through the Great Tribulation period. There is actually a moral and a theological problem if the church were to enter even one phase of the Tribulation period.

The subject, therefore, has changed, and we are now talking about things other than the church. We have been introduced to a book with seven seals, and the seals are being removed. Six seals have been removed in the previous chapter. The four horsemen introduce the Great Tribulation period, and the seven seals give an overall picture of that seven-year period. The last of the seals bears down on the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation period. At this point, one-fourth of the population of the earth has been destroyed in judgment, destroyed in death. I am sure that anyone reading Revelation senses the fact that it is going to be very difficult to make it through this period -- especially for those who turn to God, accept Christ, and stand for Him. The question is: Will believers be able to stand for Him during this period?

John is now going to put down another principle which he will follow because he knows that you and I are going to have trouble with the Revelation. Therefore he has made it very simple for us. He introduces series of sevens, but the way that he deals with them is the important thing for us to see. A format is followed from the breaking of the seals to the bowls of wrath. Between the sixth and seventh of each, there is an interlude of seemingly extraneous matter, but it is explanatory matter -- it explains the action and answers certain questions. This is what chapter 7 will do for us. This principle of an explanatory interval will be true of the seven trumpets, of the seven performers and of the seven bowls of wrath. You will find John following this principle all the way through this particular section of Revelation, so that we do not lose our way.

We need now to deal with the question that any reasonable person would raise at this point: What about people turning to God and getting saved during this period? Second Thessalonians makes it clear that the Holy Spirit, the Restrainer, is removed from the earth (see [2Thess. 2:7](#)). He has taken the church to present it to Christ. Since you cannot

have any turning to God without the work of the Holy Spirit, will anybody get saved without the Holy Spirit being present on the earth?

My friend, the Holy Spirit will be present. I did not say that the Holy Spirit will have left the world but that He no longer will restrain evil. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost to perform a specific ministry of calling out a body of believers in the church which is referred to as the body of Christ. When the church is removed from the earth, that peculiar ministry of the Holy Spirit will end. One of His ministries in this particular era has been that of restraining evil. It was absolutely essential that He be a restrainer in order for the gospel to penetrate a Satan-controlled and Satan-blinded world. How could the Word go out unless the Spirit of God held back evil? Just think of the forces of evil that are working against the getting out of the Word of God today. In my own experience with our Bible-teaching radio ministry, we just sailed along like a breeze for a year or two. Then problems came along. I became ill, and all sorts of things took place. When we finally regained our equilibrium and began to look around, we saw what was happening: the enemy was busy. Believe me, if the Restrainer had not been at work, I am sure that we would have been removed from the scene.

How are people going to get saved during the period of the Great Tribulation if the Holy Spirit will not be restraining evil? The Great Tribulation is the Devil's holiday. That is the day when he is going to have freedom to do as he pleases. We will see why God is going to grant that: it is a period of the judgment of God upon a Christ-rejecting world. Then, does anybody get saved in the Great Tribulation period? My friend, I believe that there will be a greater company saved in that period than in any other seven-year period in the history of the world. Chapter 7 is going to tell us how that will take place. The Holy Spirit is in the world after the church is removed just as He was in the world before Pentecost. In reading the Old Testament, you will find the Spirit of God working in the hearts and lives of men and women. Many multitudes were brought to God, but He was not restraining evil in the world, and He was not baptizing believers into the body of the church in the Old Testament. That is what He is doing today, but that ministry will cease. However, He will still be in the business of getting men and women to Christ. He will continue His ministry which has always been one of taking God's creation and renovating it. We are told in the beginning, ". . . the spirit of God moved [brooded] upon the face of the waters" ([Gen. 1:2](#)). The Spirit of God broods over this earth today and has from the very beginning and will continue doing so after the church is removed from the earth. He will have to have an unusual, special program during this period, and John is now going to tell us what that program is going to be.

Reason For The Interlude (7:1-3)

The reason for the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals is given to us in the first three verses of this chapter.

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree [[Rev. 7:1](#)].

I give my own translation simply in an attempt to give the literal words and try to say what John was saying:

After this I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding firmly the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on the earth nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

"After this" refers to the tremendous judgment of the previous chapter, the riding of the four horsemen. In the riding of the four horsemen I believe we have been given a bird's-eye view of the Great Tribulation period, an overall picture, and now the details are going to be given to us.

"After this I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth." A smart-alecky young fellow got up at a meeting years ago where Dr. Harry Ironside was speaking and said: "I told you the Bible was unscientific! The Bible teaches that the earth is flat because it says 'the four corners of the earth.'" Dr. Ironside replied, "Young man, I am amazed that you didn't know that the earth has four corners. They are North, East, South, and West." Those are the four corners, and that is the direction of the four angels. There is one in the North, the East, the South, and the West.

"Holding firmly the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." These would be the winds of judgment. God uses wind in judgment, and He controls the wind. [Psalm 148:8](#) says, "Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word."

The winds of judgment are now to be held back. Nothing can move until God accomplishes His purpose. What is His purpose going to be? I do not think God would permit any period to continue on this earth in which there were not some of the human family turning to God, because that is His purpose. I do not think He would continue to keep this world running; I think He would shut it down, turn it off, and speak it out of existence if there were not folk turning to Him. Therefore, this will be a period when multitudes will turn to Him.

A great company is going to be saved, and this reveals that these judgments will accomplish a purpose for God. It will cause multitudes to turn to Him in this period, and it will cause another multitude to turn against Him. It is just like the effect of the sun shining down on a piece of soft clay. What will the sun do to the clay? It will harden it. What would be the effect of that same sunlight upon wax? It would melt it. The sun has the opposite effect upon clay and wax. The judgments of God are the same. In our lives as believers, when trouble comes to us -- I've discovered this in my own life -- it will either draw us to God or drive us from Him. We need to be drawn to Him, and that is the reason the Lord lets some of us have sicknesses. He wants to draw us closer to Himself, and this is His way of doing it.

We cannot explain every little detail here in this chapter -- at least, I cannot. I get a little irritated and provoked that I do not know as much as some of these so-called prophetic teachers claim to know today. They seem to have a private line in to the Lord. They now know the date when the Lord is coming again, and not only that, they can actually interpret some of these passages in the most amazing fashion. Where the Scriptures say

that the blood during the War of Armageddon will be up to the bridle bits, some of these fellows can tell you the type of blood it is! They irritate me because I don't seem to be able to get that kind of information -- and then I wonder what the value of it is when you get it. To begin with, the church ought to understand clearly that we have been delivered from going through this period. The Lord Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath [right now] everlasting [eternal] life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed from death unto life" ([John 5:24](#)). The Great Tribulation is a judgment, and the church is not coming into it. He made it clear to the church of Philadelphia that He was going to deliver them from that hour. What hour? The hour that John is talking about right now. We need to let Scripture speak for itself.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads [[Rev. 7:2-3](#)].

Again, this is my translation:

And I saw another angel ascending from (the) sunrising, having (the) seal of (the) Living God, and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it had been given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants (bond slaves) of our God, in their foreheads.

"Another angel" means this is a fifth angel. He is apparently of a higher rank than the other four because he gives them orders. As we see in the Book of Daniel and also in the Epistle to the Ephesians, there are gradations of orders of angels, both good and bad. Satan has the demon world well organized; he probably has generals, lieutenant colonels, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, and then a great many privates. On the other side, God also has His angels arranged. This angel gives orders to the other four.

"He cried with a great voice." In the Greek this is phone megale. If you turn phone megale around, you can see where we get our English word megaphone. Megal means "great"; phone "noise or voice."

This is an indication that frightful and fearful judgment is getting ready to break upon the earth, and it is therefore necessary to secure the servants of God. If He does not seal them, they are not going to make it through. However, they are going to be preserved in this day of wrath that is coming on the earth. The Lord Jesus Himself mentioned this in [Matthew 24:21-22](#): "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." For the sake of these who have been sealed, this terrible time will be shortened.

What is the mark that is put upon their foreheads? Now here is a place where I must confess (I sure hope you won't let this get out) that I do not know the answer, and I can

only make suggestions. There are many who know what the mark is, but the interesting thing is that you cannot get any two of them to agree as to what it is. I have come to the conclusion that they are all wrong. We are not told what it is, and I do not think it is important for the church to know what the mark is. We are simply told that they are going to be marked. We do know that there are those who will not be able to trade during this period when the Antichrist comes to power unless they have the mark of the Beast. This mark of God's is in contrast to the mark of the Beast. My feeling is that it is a spiritual mark that will be in their lives: ". . . by their fruits ye shall know them" ([Matt. 7:20](#)) -- by their lives. I believe that is going to be the mark of God's own during this period because the godless are really going to be godless in this period. I personally don't see how they can be any more godless than the godless in the world today, but the Word of God says they can go much farther than they have gone even in our day.

We now have this interlude before the seventh seal is opened. This angel is apparently more than a sergeant; he is probably a lieutenant colonel or a general. He says, "Hold everything! Hold back the winds of judgment, the winds of the Great Tribulation period, because we have to seal these folk so they can make it through." There will be two great companies sealed, one out of the nation Israel and the other out of the Gentiles.

Where is the church? The church is not here; they are with Christ in, I believe, the New Jerusalem. He said that He was going to prepare a place for those who were His, and now that He has taken them off the earth, they are with Him. That city will come down from God a little later on in the Revelation, and we will get a look at it.

The reason, therefore, for the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals is to make sure that these sealed ones are going to make it through the Great Tribulation period. The Lord Jesus made it very clear that they are going to make it through.

Remnant Of Israel Sealed (7:4-8)

When God deals with Israel, I have always noticed that He deals with dates and He deals with numbers. When He is dealing with the church, He does not deal with either dates or numbers. Paul never turned in a report to anybody as to how many were saved. Even when we get to the great company of Gentiles who are saved in the Great Tribulation period, the number is not given. When God deals with Israel, however, He deals with numbers and He deals with dates. The insistence of some Bible teachers to set dates for these prophetic events has hurt the study of prophecy and has brought it down to a low level, whereas this aspect ought to be kept on as high a level as any other subject of prophecy.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel [[Rev. 7:4](#)].

And I heard the number of those sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

One hundred forty-four thousand is the number sealed from the nation Israel, but we will see that out of the earth there will be a multitude of Gentiles saved -- too numerous to count. I notice that all the evangelists and preachers today are able to give you a count of

the number saved in their meetings. In fact, some may give you a count that is a little bit larger than it really is. But here is one company of saved that they couldn't count.

Apparently, in the Great Tribulation there is going to be a great company who are to be saved. How are they going to be saved? They are going to be sealed. The Holy Spirit is going to be here, not only to regenerate them, but He will also have a special ministry of sealing in this period. The seal guarantees that they are going to be delivered. When you go down to the post office to register a letter, a postal clerk puts a stamp on it and puts a seal on it, and you pay a little extra for that. That seal means that the entire postal department is going to get behind that letter and see that it is delivered. They may be a little late in delivering it, but they guarantee that they are going to deliver it. That is what "sealed" means here. The Holy Spirit guarantees that they will make it through the Great Tribulation. If it weren't for the seal, they wouldn't make it through.

If you really want to know the truth, Vernon McGee would not make it through today if it weren't for the Holy Spirit. I wonder if you and I really realize how weak we are? I would deny Him before the sun went down if it wasn't for His work in me by the Spirit of God. We all have that nature which is in rebellion against God.

This company of the 144,000 can be identified without any speculation whatsoever. To me it is almost nonsense for any group to claim that they are the 144,000. Two cults did that in their beginnings, but then they passed 144,000 in membership. Apparently, they were not very optimistic when they started out. They say they take it literally, but they have a problem, now that they have passed that number. They should have gone out of business when they got to 144,000, but they didn't.

This number does not refer to any group in existence today, nor does it refer to the church. During the Great Tribulation, 144,000 are going to be saved "out of every tribe of the children of Israel." If you think that you are in the 144,000, you are not only saying that you belong to Israel, but you also had better know your tribe because the tribes are going to be identified.

It is very clear that God will have a remnant of His people who are going to be saved. This may seem to you like a big number, but actually, it is very small. There are over fourteen million Jews today in the world, and in comparison to that number, you can see that the remnant of the children of Israel is really going to be very small.

There is no use speculating here or trying to draw on symbols. Some even say that the number -- 144,000 -- is a symbol of another number. Cannot God say what He wants to say? Cannot He count? Certainly He can. If He says 144,000, I do not think He means 145,000. I think He means exactly 144,000.

"Out of every tribe of the children of Israel." From the day God called Abraham, there has always been a remnant that is true to God. There is a remnant today. I know many wonderful Christian Jews. I don't know why I say "Christian Jews" since I don't say Christian Americans or Christian Germans. But we do say this of Israel because of the fact that there is the remnant that trusts Christ in our day. It is not a large remnant, but there is not a very large remnant of Gentiles either. I suppose that the great minority group is that of real believers in Christ.

Paul says in [Romans 9:8](#): "That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

That is true today. Again Paul writes in [Romans 11:4-5](#): "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Paul said that in his day there was a remnant in the church. There is a remnant in our day in the church. During the Great Tribulation there will be a remnant, and the number is 144,000.

These are the ones who are going to witness of Christ in the Great Tribulation period. In [Matthew 24:14](#), speaking of this period, the Lord Jesus said: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Some will say that the gospel of the Kingdom is a different gospel. Of course, it is not. God has never had but one way to save sinners, and that is through the death of Christ. If you had asked Abel when he brought that little lamb to God, "Abel, do you think that little lamb will save you?" he would have said, "No, this little lamb is representing the One who God told my mother was coming from a woman to be the Savior of the world. This little lamb typifies Him." John the Baptist almost stepped out of character when he said, ". . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). The gospel of the kingdom is the gospel of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ, which is going to alert the nation Israel, and many will turn to Christ. These will preach the gospel, but they will have something to add that we have no right to say today. They will say, "And then shall the end come." In other words, it is not going to be long until He will be back. We have no right to say that Christ will be returning soon, because we know neither the day nor the hour when He shall come.

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephtalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand [[Rev. 7:5-8](#)].

Here is my translation:

Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand; of the tribe of

Issachar twelve thousand; of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Twelve thousand are sealed out of each tribe. The 144,000 are divided by twelve, and one-twelfth is in each tribe, so that we know that John is talking about the children of Israel. I do not see how anyone can spiritualize this and attempt to appropriate it either to themselves or to some group other than the children of Israel. God promised, as we see again and again in the Old Testament, that He would come and establish His Kingdom, which we will see is first a thousand-year kingdom, a time of testing, and then moves right into eternity.

We are given here the twelve tribes of Israel. One writer says that there are thirteen times in the Bible that the twelve tribes are listed, and another writer says that they are given eighteen times. I do not know which is accurate, but in every case where the twelve tribes are named, it is always twelve tribes. Sometimes changes are made, and I cannot always determine the reason for the changes, but I know that God had something in mind when He did it.

There are certain peculiarities in this list which I will call to your attention, but I don't think it is essential to go into detail concerning these twelve tribes. First of all, you will notice that Judah heads the list. The tribe of Reuben should come first, for Reuben was the oldest, but because of his very gross immorality, he lost the first place -- but he is still included. The question often arises: When a Christian sins, does he lose his salvation? No, but he may lose his reward. Very frankly, there will be many Christians who are saved but who indulged in sin and will lose their reward. Reuben is a very good example of how God deals, and this principle is set down here. Reuben lost first place, he lost the place of honor, but he did not lose out altogether. He is mentioned here, but he is number two; he should have been number one. Judah was the tribe given preeminence (see [Gen. 49:8-10](#)) and was the tribe from which the Lord Jesus came.

We also find that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list. Both of these tribes were guilty of leading the nation into idolatry.

In history you will find that Dan was the first tribe that fell into idolatry (see Jud. 18:30). The tribe of Dan later on became the headquarters for calf worship whereby "Jeroboam made Israel to sin" (see [1Kings 12:28-30](#)). That Dan is given top priority in the Millennium (see [Ezek. 48](#)) reveals that the grace of God can reach down and meet the needs of any sinner. The tribe of Dan is in the Millennium, but they are not sealed for the purpose of witnessing during the time of the Great Tribulation. I think that this tribe lost out a great deal.

Ephraim was also guilty of idolatry. In [Hosea 4:17](#) we read, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." That has reference to the entire northern kingdom of Israel, but remember that Ephraim was the leader there. Also, Ephraim was the tribe which led in the division of the kingdom (see [1Kings 11:26](#)).

In the list of the 144,000 who will be sealed, Joseph takes the place of Ephraim, and to take the place of Dan is Levi. Levi was the priestly tribe, and they are going to be witnesses in the Great Tribulation period, which is quite proper.

I trust that we can understand and see that God has now turned again to the nation of Israel. He has not given them up. He said, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? . . ." ([Hos. 11:8](#)). In other words God said, "I can't do it," and God didn't give them up. They are going to make it through the Great Tribulation period even though they will lose out as witness for God during that period.

The Old Testament is filled with prophecy that God has given to these people that they are to be a nation forever and that they are to be in the land of Israel forever. If you come to the New Testament and write Israel off as having disappeared and that God is through with them, you have to contradict the whole tenor and tone of the Old Testament. I have said that the Book of Revelation is like a great union station or an airport where trains or planes come in from everywhere: all the major themes of prophecy come in to Revelation. Therefore, you would certainly expect Israel to be here in the Book of Revelation -- and, lo and behold, here it is.

"Israel" means Israel. If God had wanted to call Israel the church, I think He would have just said "church" because He was able to say "church" when the time came. But now the church is not mentioned anymore, and He is talking about Israel and the 144,000 who are sealed to witness for Him.

The 144,000 are sealed, especially because they are going to witness during this period, and it is going to cost them a great deal. If they were not sealed, they sure wouldn't be able to make it through. God never leaves Himself without a witness upon this earth.

Redeemed Multitude Of Gentiles (7:9-17)

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb [[Rev. 7:9-10](#)].

After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation and out of tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb arrayed (clothed) in white robes and palm branches in their hands; and they cry with a great voice saying, The salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb.

"After these things I saw." John is seeing as well as hearing these things.

"And behold, a great multitude which no man could number." Someone will say, "You mean to tell me that men couldn't count that crowd?" What it says is that no one man could number these -- and it doesn't say anything about a computer. It says that no one man could number this crowd because it is such a large crowd. I wouldn't dare to venture any guess whatsoever, but the size of this multitude is obviously stupendous. It is not a one-man job to number them.

"Out of every nation and out of tribes, and peoples, and tongues." These are Gentiles, people from every tribe and nation under the sun. This means that in the Great Tribulation the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached through the world. I want to repeat this: the 144,000 witnesses in the Great Tribulation period are going to do in seven years what the church up to the present has not done in over nineteen hundred years. Do not boast about your missionary program. None of us are reaching very many. But, during the Great Tribulation, there will be a great company of people who will be saved.

It is my own judgment -- I don't think that Scripture says this anywhere, because nothing has yet to be fulfilled before the Lord removes the church -- but it looks to me now as if He is going to let the world hear the gospel before the Rapture of the church. I believe that radio is one of the media that will be used. I think there are other media that will be used: the tape ministry, the printed page, and evangelism. Many evangelists are reaching multitudes of people today. Other radio programs are doing a much bigger job than we are doing, but if you put us all together, we are making quite an impact on this world in which we live.

"Standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Here is a great company who have come out of the Great Tribulation period and are rejoicing in their salvation. They are redeemed and have made it through the Great Tribulation period. Again may I say, the greatest days of God's salvation are in the future.

It is possible that most of this company were martyred during the Great Tribulation period, but they were faithful to the end. The Lord Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse, speaking of this same period, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" ([Matt. 24:13](#)). Did they endure to the end because they gritted their teeth, clenched their fists, and pulled themselves up by their bootstraps? No, they didn't do that at all -- they were sealed by the Holy Spirit.

The "white robes" set before us the righteousness of Christ in which they are clothed. We cannot stand before God in our own righteousness because our own righteousness is as filthy rags, and I do not think you are going to wear filthy rags in the presence of God.

"Palm branches" is literally in the Greek "palm trees." They are the sign of victory, victory in Christ. This multitude is part of the great triumphal entry that will occur when Christ returns to the earth. The triumphal entry has really never taken place yet. That was actually more like a triumphal exit when He rode into Jerusalem on that little donkey, for He was getting ready to leave the earth, and He was on the way to the cross at that time. Since then, there has been a great company who have come to Him, and in the Great Tribulation there will be another great company. When He returns to the earth, the great company, martyred for Him in the Great Tribulation, will be included in the first resurrection, and they are going to be there. This is a wonderful, glorious picture that is given to us.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the
elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their
faces, and worshipped God,

Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen [[Rev. 7:11-12](#)].

And all the angels were standing around the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto your God for ever and ever. Amen.

This is a fabulous, fantastic scene of universal worship of God by His creatures. The church is here, the Old Testament saints are here, and the Tribulation saints are here. And now the angels join in on it.

There are just one or two things I would like to say about the angels. I do not want to labor the point, and I would not contend with anyone about it, but nowhere in Scripture does it say that angels sing. They are saying this here. However, the important thing to note is that the other companies thank God for their redemption, "Salvation to our God," but the angels do not mention it. They praise God for His attributes and goodness, but not for salvation. Why? They are sinless creatures, not redeemed sinners. I do not think the angels will be able to sing, but I do believe that Vernon McGee will be able to sing in that day. I cannot do it now, but I sure will be able to sing with that great company.

I hope that this will begin to broaden your vision and your comprehension as to what heaven is going to be. A great many people think that the only ones to be in heaven are their little group, their little church, or their little denomination. Well, my friend, there will be other redeemed people there besides even the church. I think that it will surprise a lot of the saints to discover this when they get to heaven. I wish that we could discover it down here because it would give us a greater love for God and lead us to worship Him more in a very real way, to worship Him in spirit and truth.

One of the elders now wants to bring John up to date on what is taking place:

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb [[Rev. 7:13-14](#)].

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This is a very enlightening passage of Scripture. One of the elders went over to John and said, "John, who are these believers here arrayed in the white robes?" And John said, "My lord, thou knowest." This is an idiomatic expression, and I think we have one like it in our day. When someone asks us a question and we don't know the answer, we just sort of lift up our hands and say, "Search me!" which means, "I don't know!" This is exactly

what John is saying here: "You know that I don't know. You tell me because I don't know."

"And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation." If these people gathered here were the church, John would have known it. John wrote to the believers in his day. He knew about the church, he knew about the body of believers, and he wrote to them about love, that great unifying cement that holds them together. But John doesn't know who this company is. The elder, who is a representative of the church now in heaven, knows that this company is not the church. It is an altogether different company. It is those who came out of the Great Tribulation. Doesn't that tell you that the church is not going through the Great Tribulation? This is a special company, out of all tribes and tongues and nations, who have come out of the Great Tribulation.

We live in a day when God makes a division in the human family. One division is between the saved and the lost, of course -- that is the great bifurcation of the human family. But if you want a racial division or a group division of the human family, the Word of God has something to say about it: "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" ([1Cor. 10:32](#)). Paul says to the Corinthians that there are three groups -- the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God -- and they are not to give offense to any one of these groups. This is one of the divisions that the Scripture makes of the human family. The Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God comprise the division that runs right down through the human family today. In the Great Tribulation, we come to a period when there are but two groups: Jews and Gentiles. Where is the church of God? It went to be with Him. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself . . ." ([John 14:2-3](#)). The church is with Him in heaven as we move through the Revelation. In [1Corinthians 12:13](#) Paul says: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." God today is calling out of the two divisions, both Jews and Gentiles, a people for His name that are different -- the church -- and that church will be taken out of the world.

I do not like the impression given today by some -- it is a pessimistic viewpoint -- that somehow or another God is failing. My friend, God is doing exactly what He said He was going to do: that in this age He would call a people out of this world to Himself. He is doing a much better job at that than you and I think He is. When I was a pastor of a church, I did not think He was doing very much, but I have discovered as our radio ministry has reached out across this land and around the world that there are multitudes who are turning to Christ everywhere. And others are reporting the same thing. God is calling a people out of this world to Himself.

John makes it clear that this group he sees in heaven is different from the church. They came through the Great Tribulation. Let me remind you that it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who gave us the term, "great tribulation." Some may think that some rank, wildhaired fundamentalist thought of this term, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who thought of it and designated this period as the Great Tribulation. In [Matthew 24:21](#) He says: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Both in Matthew and in Revelation, it is expressed in

the Greek in a way we cannot express in English. There is an article with the adjective great and an article with tribulation; it is "the tribulation, the great one." It is given to us like that for emphasis. In other words, this is something that is different; this is something that is indeed unique.

Let me repeat that when John is quizzed by one of the elders, he is unable to identify this great company. John would have known them if this were the church; or if they were Old Testament saints or Israelites, I think John would have known it. This company he does not recognize at all. They are identified as redeemed Gentiles who have come out of the Great Tribulation.

Their robes were white, which speaks of the righteousness of Christ. How did they get that righteousness? It is because Christ shed His blood. The only reason that you and I will be able to stand before God is because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He died that you and I might live, and that is true of this group here also. It has always been true that God has only one way of saving mankind, and it is by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" ([1Cor. 15:1-4](#)). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received." Paul says that this is not new with him. He did not originate it. It was given to him when the Lord Jesus taught him for two years out yonder in the Arabian desert.

Now this is the gospel: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures [according to the Old Testament]; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The gospel is not God asking you to do something; it is God telling you that He has done something for you. The gospel is not your giving something to God; the gospel is God's giving something to you. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. How do you get it? By faith. That is the only way you can receive a gift. Suppose it is Christmastime and you come to me and say, "Dr. McGee, here is a gift for you." Now what do I have to do to receive it? I could say to you, "I'll come and mow your lawn for you." But you would say, "I don't want you to mow my lawn. This is a gift." I would insult you if I tried to pay you for your gift. Suppose I offered you the few cents in my pocket in exchange for your gift -- that would be an insult. My friend, the thing has gotten all mixed up today. The gospel is what God has done for us. It is His gift.

Again Paul writes in [Ephesians 1:7](#): "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." God has plenty of grace. It does not matter who you are, He can save you. You may think you are a dirty, mean sinner. Well, that is the only kind He saves -- we are all that.

We have therefore this great company of Gentiles who are not part of the church. We need to enlarge our conception of the redeemed to the extent that it goes beyond the borders of the church and certainly beyond the borders of your little group or denomination or my little group.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes [[Rev. 7:15-17](#)].

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple (sanctuary); and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle (tent) over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat (scorching wind): for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them into fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." We now know for sure that this is not the church, for the church is never identified with the temple. At the end of this book, when the church is in the New Jerusalem, there is no temple there. The church will never have a temple. There is going to be one here on the earth, but there is not one in heaven where the church is. Therefore, this could not be the church.

"And He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle (tent) over them." This is for their protection, you see.

This company has had it; they have been through the Great Tribulation. Most of them, I believe, were martyrs and laid down their lives for Christ. Although we are not specifically told that, they are presented to us as being before the throne of God in heaven. The things that are mentioned now are things they have endured. They are not going to hunger or thirst -- they apparently did. They have been out in the burning heat of the sun. They have also been thirsty for spiritual things which they did not have. And they wept, but now God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. They made it through the Great Tribulation because of the blood of the Lamb. This is a wonderful company of folk that is presented to us here.

My friend, the Lord Jesus has other sheep. He told His disciples, and it was hard for them to understand: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" . . . ([John 10:16](#)). He could say the same thing to the church today, "I have other sheep that you do not know anything about." This company of Gentiles are some of the other sheep who will be redeemed but are not a part of the church.

Chapter 8

THEME: Opening the seventh seal

In chapter 8 we have the opening of the seventh seal which introduces the seven angels blowing seven trumpets. Four of the trumpets will be dealt with in this chapter. After the

parenthetical matter of chapter 7, the sealing to two companies, we now have the opening of the seals resumed. Only the seventh seal remains to be opened. This is the pattern that John sets for the remainder of the Book of Revelation so that we cannot be led astray. There will be series of sevens and, in fact, there are four such series which relate to the Great Tribulation period. John will give the first six of whatever the series is. Then he will present parenthetical material that contributes to the understanding of that particular series. Finally, the opening of the seventh of the series will introduce the next series of seven, which means that these series are interrelated, tied together, and actually belong to the same period.

There is no reason to get bogged down or to be sensational at this point. To begin with, we have said that everything from chapter 4 on is future -- "the things that shall be after these things" (see [Rev. 1:19](#)). We are living in the things that are present, the church age, and in one sense these things do not concern us. Many people say, "Oh, it frightens me to study the Book of Revelation!" I will admit that, beginning with the riding of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, these are terrible, terrific judgments that are coming on this earth. They are so tremendous that they boggle the mind just to read about them. But we can at least know where we are: these are things that will take place after the church has left the earth. If you are a child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit to be delivered to Christ when the church goes out of the world before the Great Tribulation period. This is what is called "the blessed hope" of the church.

These seven trumpets will bring us to the full intensity of the Great Tribulation. The seven seals bring judgments which are the natural results of the activities of sinful man apart from God. The sixth seal brings the judgment of nature. The seven trumpets reveal that God is directly and supernaturally judging a rebellious race.

The seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven personalities, and the seven vials or bowls of wrath all concern the same period, but from a little different angle. (1) In the seven seals we see the judgment which is the result of man's willful activity. The judgment of God will be coming upon sinful man. In the first seal we saw the riding of the white horse -- a false peace; "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . ." ([1Thess. 5:3](#)). The second seal was the riding of the red horse of war. War comes because it is in the heart of man. A great many people think that if we took all the guns away from people, if there were no arms and no atom bombs, then we would have peace on the earth. My friend, war is in the heart of man, and you have to change the heart of man before you can get rid of war. Frankly, I would have more confidence in a real, born-again Christian who has a gun than an unsaved man who does not have a gun, because if he is unarmed, he can still choke his victim to death. We are seeing that murder is in the human heart. (2) In the seven trumpets, to which we are coming in this chapter, we see the judgment which is the direct activity of God. (3) When we come to the seven personalities, we will see the judgment which is the result of Satan's fight against God. Satan will be brought out in the open at that time. (4) In the seven bowls of wrath, we will see the final judgment of the Great Tribulation, which is the direct activity of God because of man's and Satan's rebellion -- God will judge both, by the way.

As we come to this section in which symbols will be used, let us remember that a symbol is a symbol of a fact. We will find that there is a strange and strong similarity between the plagues of Egypt in Moses' day and the trumpet judgments. It is quite reasonable and logical to conclude that if the plagues of Moses were literal, then the plagues that are coming in the Great Tribulation period are going to be literal. The symbols that are used are symbols of the reality which is coming. Plain language could not make it clear to our minds how terrible and tragic the Great Tribulation will be. It begs description, and so God exhausts language and brings in symbols. It is well to keep in mind that this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. We see Him now in a new role of Judge. The symbols that are used are not hazy and shadowy symbols which can be dissipated into thin air by some specious system of hermeneutics. When symbols are used -- and they are used in this book -- the key to their meaning is supplied. Scripture will furnish the explanation, and you do not need to draw upon your imagination.

The Book of Revelation is the last book in the Bible because a working knowledge of the sixty-five books preceding it is the basic requirement for an understanding of its vivid language. I get a little irritated when I see a new Christian immediately start teaching a class in the Book of Revelation. Why doesn't he go back to the beginning and start with Genesis? Take some other book, but do not begin with Revelation. I come to the teaching of Revelation only after having taken nearly five years to go through the rest of the Scriptures. I believe that gives us the right to teach the Book of Revelation; I would not want it otherwise. It was Peter who said, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" ([2Pet. 1:20](#)). You do not interpret Revelation by itself; there are sixty-five books before it. The symbols are going to be given to us, but we need to remember that the symbols stand for awful realities.

The opening of the seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets, and that is the way this entire book is built. If the structure of the book is followed, it will prevent you from going off into fanaticism and sensationalism and, as a Christian, it certainly ought to keep you from saying, "The Book of Revelation is so frightful! It terrifies me!" It ought not to terrify you. Actually, it ought to be a comfort to you. I thank God that He is going to judge this world that is running wild today. The way that mankind has blundered and gotten this world into a mess makes it look like it is filled with madmen. I thank God He is going to judge it, and He is going to judge it rightly. It is very comforting to recognize that.

People often urge me to speak out on my radio broadcast against certain things that are taking place. It is not my business to get on radio and denounce every wrong. My business is to give out just the Word of God, and that is what I am going to do. He is going to straighten this world out someday. I wouldn't have that job for anything in the world. I am glad it is His job. He is going to straighten out this world, and He is going to move in judgment.

Maybe you don't like the fact that the gentle Jesus is going to judge. We have already seen that the wrath of the Lamb will be terrifying to those on earth. My friend, when you talk about the gentle Jesus, you had better get acquainted with Him. He died for you, He loves you, and He wants to save you, but if you will not have Him, I tell you, there is waiting ahead of you a terrifying judgment. Someone will say to me, "You are trying to

frighten people." I would like to scare you into heaven if I could, but I know you are too sophisticated and cynical for that. But, my beloved, judgment is coming on this earth. I say, Hallelujah! I am glad that it is coming and that God is not going to let the world go on like it is now. It has gone on long enough.

Opening Of The Seventh Seal -- Introduction Of Seven Trumpets (8:1)

The first verse of this chapter describes what takes place as the seventh seal is opened.

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour [[Rev. 8:1](#)].

Here is my translation of this verse:

And when (ever) He opened the seventh seal there came to pass a silence in heaven of about a half hour.

"There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Many years ago I was speaking at a conference to about three or four hundred young people here in Southern California. I was out on the grounds of the camp, and coming toward me was a group of girls, and in the middle of them there was one boy. It looked like the girls were going to take him apart, and they were making a great deal of noise about it. Finally, they came up to me, and the girls wanted me to hear what this fellow had said. He said to me, "Dr. McGee, did you know that there are not going to be any women in heaven?"

I said, "No, I didn't know that. Do you have Scripture for it?"

He said, "Yes. The Bible says that there is going to be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. If there are any women there, there couldn't be any silence for that long!"

That young man was surrounded by a bunch of girls who were attempting to correct him on that particular interpretation, and frankly I agreed with the girls that that is not the meaning here at all. This verse does not mean that there are not going to be any women in heaven!

I probably did wrong to open this passage on that very light note, because here is a passage that has to do with a great solemnity and great seriousness. The Lord Jesus Christ is still in command. He opens the seventh seal, and there is introduced a fanfare of seven trumpets. He directs the action now from heaven. We need to keep that before us through the entire book. Do not lose sight of the fact that Revelation presents Him in His glory as the Judge of all the earth.

It may deceive you to have Him presented as the gentle Jesus who went about doing good -- which He did, but we are also going to see the wrath of the Lamb some day. The Lamb is the One of whom John the Baptist said, ". . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" ([John 1:29](#)). Men are not lost because they are sinners; they are lost because they have rejected Jesus who died for them. Even if you go into a lost eternity and have not accepted Christ, He died for you, and you simply made His sacrifice for you of no avail. You have trodden underfoot the blood of Christ when you take that kind of attitude and position toward Him.

This is a very solemn scene. The Lord Jesus Christ orders a halt on all fronts: heaven, hell, and earth. Nothing can move without his permission. He had already ordered the cessation of natural forces on the earth when He ordered the sealing and saving of two definite groups. Now, for a brief moment, there is a lull in judgment activity; there is a heavenly hush. Godet defined it: "This silence is a pause of action." It is the lull before the storm.

Why is there this strange silence? God's patience is not exhausted. When the sixth seal was opened and nature responded with a mighty convulsion, brave men weakened for a moment. Christ gave them opportunity to repent. But like the Pharaoh of old who, when the heat was taken off, let his willful heart return to its original intention, many men will go back to their blasphemous conduct when there is a calm. They probably will even rebuke themselves for showing a yellow streak. They will say, "It was only nature reacting. It wasn't God, after all. Everything can be explained by natural causes." This, my friend, is the lull before the storm. As someone has said, "The steps of God from mercy to judgment are always slow, reluctant, and measured." God is reluctant to judge for He is slow to anger. Judgment is His strange work. Isaiah writes: "For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act" ([Isa. 28:21](#)).

What is strange about God? That He judges, that He is a God of love, judging His creatures. "For I have no pleasures in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD . . ." ([Ezek. 18:32](#)). This silence marks the transition from grace to judgment. God is waiting. By the way, He is waiting for you today if you have not come to Him. You can come to Him, for He is a gracious Savior.

Blowing Of The Seven Trumpets (8:1)

Judgment is getting ready to come upon the earth. This is the lull before the storm of judgment which is coming on the earth during this particular period. When I was a boy, my dad built a storm cellar wherever we moved. I spent half of my boyhood, during the spring and early summer, sleeping in the storm cellar. Late one evening my dad and I were standing in the storm cellar doorway. He was watching a storm come up, and he saw that it was not going to hit our little town in southern Oklahoma. It hit one just about ten miles away. We could see the funnel as it let down near that little town. But before that storm hit, there was a certain stillness. The wind had been blowing, the rain had been coming down, there had been a great deal of thunder and lightning, but suddenly all of that stopped, and for a few moments there was a deathlike silence. Then the wind began to blow like I've never seen it blow. It was not a funnel-shaped hurricane or a tornado, but just a straight wind. It was all my dad could do to get that storm cellar door down, and I helped him hold onto the chain. The storm broke in all its fury. This is the way the Great Tribulation will break upon the earth, and it is presented to us in this way in the blowing of the trumpets, which is the subject of chapter 8, [verse 2](#), through chapter 11.

Angel At The Altar With Censer Of Incense (8:2-6)

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets [[Rev. 8:2](#)].

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and there was given to them seven (war) trumpets.

These "seven angels" are introduced to us as a special group. I believe that Gabriel is in this group because we are told that he stood before God. When he announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias, he said, ". . . I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God . . ." ([Luke 1:19](#)). The seraphim are also identified as beings who stand before God (see [Isa. 6:1-2](#)). However, these seven angels are seemingly a different order from the seraphim as their mission and service are altogether different.

"Seven trumpets" have a special meaning for Israel. I don't want you to miss this; I consider this all important. Here is where it is essential to have a knowledge of the Old Testament. In the Book of Numbers, Moses was given instructions by God for the making of two silver trumpets. Two was the number of witnesses. The Lord has said on several occasions that in the mouth of two witnesses a matter would be established. These two trumpets were used on the wilderness march in a twofold way. They were used for the calling of the assembly, and they were used to start the procession moving on the wilderness march. "Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps" ([Num. 10:2](#)).

When Israel entered the land, the trumpets were used for two other purposes: "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppressteth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the LORD your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God" ([Num. 10:9-10](#)).

A single trumpet was blown on the wilderness march to assemble the princes: "And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee" ([Num. 10:4](#)).

This single trumpet is, to my judgment, that which corresponds to "the last trump" which Paul mentions in [1Corinthians 15](#). This trumpet was for the bringing together of a certain group out of Israel. Paul writes: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" ([1Cor. 15:51-52](#)).

Unfortunately, there are some who assume that "the last trump" of [1Corinthians 15](#) is the seventh trumpet of Revelation -- there is no relation at all. Listen again to Paul: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" ([1Thess. 4:16](#)).

The "shout" is the voice of the Lord Jesus. "The voice of the archangel" means that His voice is like that of an archangel. "The trump of God" is still His voice -- His voice will sound like a trumpet. We see that from chapter 1, [verse 10](#), where John says that he heard a voice like the sound of a trumpet, and he turned to see the glorified Christ. The glorified

Christ is going to call His own out of the earth. When Paul speaks of "the last trump" -- "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised" -- he means the call of the Lord Jesus. It is the last call that He makes to the church, and it is therefore called "the last trump." But the Old Testament type of it is the calling of the princes from out of the children of Israel. One trumpet is blown, and it has no relation to the movement of the children of Israel on the wilderness march.

However, the trumpets did sound an alarm which moved Israel on the wilderness march, and an alarm was sounded to move each division. The tribes were divided into four groups of three tribes each which divided into four groups of three tribes each which camped on the four sides of the tabernacle. In addition there were three separate families of Levi who carried the articles of furniture of the tabernacle: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. Four and three make seven. There were seven blowings of the trumpets to move Israel out. When the first trumpet was blown, the ark moved out with the Kohathites carrying it. Then the tribe of Judah moved out with the two other tribes under the banner of Judah, and so on until they were all on the march. Every man knew his place and stayed in his station. There was no disorder in the camp of Israel whatsoever. (The apostle Paul says that everything is to be done decently and in order in the church. I wish the church were as orderly as Israel was on the wilderness march.) But note particularly that it took seven trumpets to move them out.

The seven trumpets of Revelation will likewise have the positive effect of moving Israel into the land of Palestine. I believe that it will take these seven trumpets to get all of Israel back into that land. This is another reason I do not believe their present return to the land is a fulfillment of prophecy. Rather, it will be fulfilled in the Great Tribulation with the blowing of the seven trumpets as they were on the wilderness march. After the seventh trumpet, Israel is identified for us in chapter 12 as the special object of God's protection. An understanding of the trumpets, therefore, will prevent us from identifying "the last trump" of the church with the seven trumpets of Revelation.

As the trumpets of Israel were used at the battle of Jericho, so the walls of this world's opposition to God will crumble and fall during the Great Tribulation. When the Lord Jesus comes, He will put down the last vestige of rebellion against Himself and against God and establish His Kingdom here upon this earth. This is a book of triumph and of victory for our God. At the end it has the Hallelujah Chorus, and maybe you and I can sing it when we get there!

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne [[Rev. 8:3](#)].

And another angel came and stood over [GR: epi] the altar, having a golden censer (bowl); and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto (give it unto) the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

"Another angel" is positively not Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is no longer in the position of intercessor for the church. We saw in chapters 4-5 that He moved away from that position and was given the seven-sealed book. He is in charge of everything that

happens from there on in Revelation. He is not moving as one of the actors down on earth's stage; He is in heaven with the church, and He is not the intercessor. He is now in the place of judgment. He holds the book of the seven seals, and He directs all the activities from the throne. This angel is, as it is stated here, just "another angel." I do not think the Lord Jesus would be identified as that. Although it is true that in the Old Testament the preincarnate Christ appeared as an angel, I do not believe He will ever appear again as an angel. He will be as He is in the glorified body, and we will see Him as He is someday.

The "golden altar" is the place where prayer is offered. Christ is not in the place of intercession before the golden altar. He is now upon the throne. Incense is likened unto prayer and is a type of prayer. David said in [Psalm 141:2](#), "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense. . . ."

Incense speaks of the value of Christ's name and work in prayer. "If you ask in My name" is His injunction. Many today who really believe the Word of God are falling into the habit of ending their prayer by just saying "Amen." Someone said to me, "It is redundant to say, 'In Jesus' name,' because in your heart you are praying in Jesus' name." I agree that to pray in Jesus' name means more than simply putting on a tag end, "in Jesus' name." But I want to say that if you are making a prayer in Jesus' name, and especially a public prayer, be sure to say that it is in Jesus' name. I believe that is very important. Here they are offering incense, a sweet smelling incense. You and I are not heard for our much speaking or for our flowery prayer. We are heard when our prayer is made in Jesus' name.

It is interesting that the incense was given to this angel. Christ didn't need anything given to Him when He prayed. The prayers of saints which were offered under the fifth seal (see [Rev. 6:9-11](#)) are now being answered because of the person and sacrifice of Christ.

And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand [[Rev. 8:4](#)].

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Prayer is going to be answered because of Christ.

And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake [[Rev. 8:5](#)].

And the angel hath taken (takes) the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and he throws (casts) it upon (into) the earth: and there were (came to pass) thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

The high priest of Israel took a censer with him as he carried the blood into the Holy of Holies. Here the ritual is reversed, because out of heaven the censer is hurled upon the earth. In other words, the prayers ascended as incense, and now we have the answer coming down. The tribulation saints had prayed, "Oh, God, avenge us!" The people of the earth, having rejected the death of Christ for the judgment of their sins, must now bear the judgment for their own sins. The Great Tribulation is going to get under way.

"Thunders" denotes the approach of the coming storm of God's judgment.

"Voices" reveals that this is the intelligent direction of God and not the purposeless working of natural forces. God is in charge.

"Lightnings" follow the thunder. This is not a reversal of the natural order. We see the lightning before we hear the thunder due to the fact that light waves move faster than sound waves. Actually, the thunder comes first, but we do not hear it until after we have already seen the lightning.

The "earthquake" is the earth's response to the severe pressure which will be placed upon it during the judgment of the Great Tribulation period.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound [[Rev. 8:6](#)].

And the seven angels having the seven trumpets prepared themselves that they should blow the trumpets.

This is a solemn moment. The half hour of silence is over. The prayers of the saints have been heard. The order is issued to prepare to blow. The angels come to attention, and at the blowing of the trumpets, divine wrath is visited upon rebellious men. The blowing of the trumpets does not introduce symbols or secrets. The plagues here are literal plagues. This method today of evaporating the meaning of Scripture by calling it symbolic is just as bad as denying the inspiration of the Word of God. In other words, it is saying that God doesn't mean what He says but that He means something else altogether.

First Trumpet -- Trees Burn (8:7)

The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up [[Rev. 8:7](#)].

And the first angel blew the trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mingled in blood, and they were cast into the earth and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up.

This is a direct judgment from God. Judgment falls upon plant life, from the grass to the great trees. Every form of botanical life is affected first. Notice, however, that it is only one-third, but it makes a tremendous impact upon the earth. Fire, the great enemy, is the instrument God uses. The Flood was used in the first global judgment; now it is going to be fire. This earth is to be purified by fire. The forests and the prairies covered with grass are partially destroyed by fire. One-third of the earth denotes the wide extent of the damage. "One-third" means not one-fourth or one-half; it means one-third. Plant life was the first to be created, and it is the first to be destroyed. In the record given in [Genesis 1:11](#), God began with the creation of plant life after order had been brought into the physical globe.

This is a literal judgment upon plant life in the same way that the seventh plague of Egypt was literal (see [Exod. 9:18-26](#)). I called attention before to the fact that there is a striking similarity between the plagues in Egypt and the trumpet judgments -- this is no accident.

If you go back to the Book of Exodus, you will see that the plagues are literal -- every believer in the Bible has to grant that; then you must also grant that these plagues in Revelation should be taken in the same fashion. I do not know by what flip-flop method of hermeneutics you could interpret one way in one passage and another way in another passage -- unless the Scripture makes it clear that you can do such a thing. When hail came down on Egypt, we are told that ". . . the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field" ([Exod. 9:25](#)) -- it was 100 percent destruction in Egypt; it will be one-third of the earth.

Second Trumpet -- Seas Become Blood (8:8-9)

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed [[Rev. 8:8-9](#)].

And the second angel sounded (blew the trumpet), and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was thrown (cast) into the sea, and the third of the sea became blood; and there died the third of the creatures which were in the sea, (even) they that have life. And the third of the ships was destroyed.

The sea, which occupies most of the earth's surface, is next affected by this direct judgment of God. The separation of the land and the sea occurred on the same day in which plant life appeared (see [Gen. 1:9-10](#)).

I want you to notice the exact language used here. John does not say that a burning mountain was cast into the sea but rather he indicates that a great mass or force "as it were a great mountain burning with fire was [thrown] cast into the sea" -- as it were a great mountain. This careful distinction in the use of language should be noted, especially since it is the common practice to lump together everything in Revelation and call it symbolic. You might think that it gets you out of a lot of trouble, but it gets you out of the frying pan into the fire, by the way.

The mountain represents something as literal and tangible as that which we have in [Jeremiah 51:25](#) where the Lord is talking about Babylon: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."

This literal mass falls into the literal sea, one-third becomes literal blood, and one-third of all the literal living creatures in the literal sea die a literal death. Nothing could be plainer than this. Also, one-third of the literal ships of all literal nations are literally destroyed. If we just let John say what he wants to, he makes it very clear.

There is no use to try to find some symbol. John doesn't say that this is symbolic. He makes it very clear that a great mass, a force, is put into the ocean. I do not know what this could possibly be, and there are two reasons for that. First of all, John didn't tell me; he didn't tell anybody, and therefore, I do not think that anyone has the answer. The

second reason is that I don't expect to be here at that time to be reading the evening papers. The bad news that we get in the papers and on television today will continue, only more so, during the Great Tribulation. I won't be here to see it. Therefore, this does not concern me too much, other than it is an awful tragedy that is coming on a Christ-rejecting world which actually ridicules the Word of God today. This is something that certainly makes the believer sorrowful in his heart -- but it ought to do more than that. It not only ought to affect our hearts; it ought also to affect our wills and our feet to start us moving to get the Word of God out to the world. That is our responsibility, and I believe it is a very solemn responsibility. We cannot keep this judgment from coming to earth, but we can get the Word of God out and reduce the population that will be left on the earth so that fewer people will go through that terrible time.

Third Trumpet -- Fresh Waters Become Bitter (8:10-11)

And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter [[Rev. 8:10-11](#)].

And the third angel blew the trumpet (sounded), and a great star burning as a torch fell from (out of) heaven, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood [Gr.: Apsinthos]; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

We are living in a world today where a great deal is being said about pollution, and it is a real problem. Man seems to have gotten a head start on the star in polluting all the waters. Personally, I think that man is going to be forced to clean up the water of the world if he is going to be able to exist at all. Self-preservation is considered to be the first law of nature, and man wants to hang on to this little earth; so he's going to do something about it. In the Great Tribulation, the fresh water is polluted, and the drinking water for mankind is contaminated, that is, one-third of it is.

Those of us who live in Southern California know something of the scarcity of fresh water for drinking and domestic use. I am told that in Los Angeles it costs somewhere around \$100 million just to turn on the spigot to get the water here to us. Fresh water is something that is essential for man and beast. I remember the drought of the '50s in Dallas, Texas. The city's water supply came from man-made lakes; the lakes dried up, and the supply was exhausted. It was necessary to get water from the Red River, but the oil companies had allowed salt water from their deep wells to drain into the river. Nobody worried about it until they needed the water for drinking. It was so salty, it was barely possible to drink it. Many people traveled to surrounding little towns to get a bottle of water to bring home. These experiences teach man how dependent he is upon fresh water.

When the children of Israel crossed over the Red Sea, they came to Marah where the waters were bitter. Moses was directed to take a tree and cast it into the waters to make

them sweet. Here in Revelation, the sweet waters are made bitter by a meteor, a star out of heaven. The tree that Moses put into the water speaks of the Cross of Christ.

"Wormwood" is a name used metaphorically in the Old Testament, according to Vincent (Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 2, p. 506), in the following ways: (1) idolatry of Israel (see [Deut. 29:18](#)); (2) calamity and sorrow (see [Jer. 9:15](#); [Jer. 23:15](#); [Lam. 3:15, 19](#)); and (3) false judgment (see [Amos 5:7](#)).

This star is literal and is a meteor containing poison which contaminates one-third of the earth's fresh water supply. The star's name suggests that this is a judgment upon man for idolatry and injustice. Calamity and sorrow are the natural compensations that are coming upon man because of this judgment.

Fourth Trumpet -- Sun, Moon, And Stars Smitten (8:12-13)

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise [[Rev. 8:12](#)].

And the fourth angel blew the trumpet (sounded), and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars; in order that a third part of them might be darkened, and the day not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

Another phase of creation upon which mankind on this earth is solely dependent for light and life is the sun. To a lesser degree, man is dependent on the moon and stars. It was on the fourth day of re-creation that these heavenly bodies appeared. They had been created before, but the light broke through on the fourth day. Now the light is put out, as it were, over a third part of the earth. God let these lights break through, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night, and they were to be for signs and seasons. The Lord Jesus indicated that in the Great Tribulation there would be special signs in these heavenly bodies: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" ([Matt. 24:29](#)).

The laws of nature are radically altered by these disturbances. There is a definite limitation -- only a third part of the light and of the day is affected. The intensity of the light has the wattage reduced by one-third. Talk about an energy shortage! Believe me, my friend, one is coming to this earth someday.

I saw an arresting billboard in Seattle, Washington, when Boeing had shut down many of its plants, laid off several thousand men, and people were beginning to leave town. On this billboard on Highway 5, some wag put this sign: "The last one leaving town, please turn out the lights." Well, God is getting ready to turn out the lights here on this earth. However, the Lord has made it clear, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" ([Gen. 8:22](#)).

A statement from Robert Govett (The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture, p. 180) is intensely interesting in this connection, in view of present-day efforts to eliminate the death penalty:

Hence day continues still, though its brightness is diminished. God shows His right to call in question man's right to the covenant. He has not kept the terms. Blood for blood is not shed by the nations. By this time the command to put the murderer to death is, through a false philanthropy, refused by the world.

This is another angle to the question of capital punishment. These judges with soft heads as well as soft hearts eliminate capital punishment and turn the criminals loose on us in this world today. Man continues to move in that direction, but God says, "I gave you a covenant that you were to protect human life, and you are protecting human life when you execute murderers." Capital punishment is a deterrent to crime, and any person who says it is not a deterrent to crime must be like an ostrich with his head in the sand. I think that capital punishment will be abolished by Antichrist if it is not done so before.

And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! [[Rev. 8:13](#)].

And I saw and heard one eagle, flying in mid-heaven (the meridian), saying with a great voice [Gr.:phone megale], Woe, woe, woe to them dwelling upon the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to blow the trumpet (sound).

When the fourth trumpet is blown, the announcement is made of a peculiar intensity of woe and judgment that is coming on the earth. The last three trumpets are separated from the other four; they are "woe" trumpets.

"And I saw and heard one eagle." Somebody says, "This eagle is talking! Is it a literal eagle?" My friend, if God can make a parrot and a few other birds talk, I do not think He will have any problem at all with an eagle.

It is interesting to note that our Lord used the eagle to speak of His coming: "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" ([Matt. 24:28](#)) -- that is after the great Battle of Armageddon.

Chapter 9

THEME: The fifth and sixth trumpets

The last three trumpets are separated from the other four by the fact that they are three woe trumpets. My translation of chapter 8, [verse 13](#), reads, "And I saw and heard one eagle, flying in midheaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe to them dwelling upon the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to blow the trumpet." We are coming to a section that is weird and wild; it boggles the mind as we read through this chapter. All kinds of interpretations have been given of this section. But let us get our feet back on the ground, and we will find that the

things mentioned here ought not to frighten us. If you are a child of God, you are not going through these things. It is not the "blessed hope" of the church to endure these things. The church will have been taken out of the world by this time, and these are the things which will happen in the Great Tribulation period to a Christ-rejecting world.

These woes mark the deepest darkness and the most painful intensity of the Great Tribulation period. They are generally associated with the last three and one-half years of the Seventieth Week of Daniel, which is the Great Tribulation period. These will be the blackest days in human history.

The language used in this section is admittedly the most difficult of interpretation, but this does not preclude our policy of following the literal line, even when the figures adopted are the most vivid and wild. If another interpretation is proper, John will furnish us the key.

Fifth Trumpet -- Fallen Star And Plague Of Locusts (9:1-12)

Here in [verse 1](#) we have a description of the scene as the fifth angel sounds a trumpet and a star falls from heaven.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit [[Rev. 9:1](#)].

And the fifth angel sounded (blew the trumpet), and I saw a star out of heaven fallen into the earth, and there was given to him a key of the long shaft (pit, well) of the abyss.

Notice the proper meaning of "the bottomless pit" is the long shaft (or pit or well) of the abyss.

"I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." We have already seen two stars, and we said that they were literal stars, meteors, that fall to the earth. I recall several years ago sitting with my wife on a lanai of a hotel on Waikiki Beach and watching a shower of meteors or shooting stars. Meteors are the shooting stars which we see on a summer night. But here we have a different kind of star because it is called "him" and acts with intelligence. We are talking now about an unusual person. This star is different, therefore, from the stars mentioned at the sounding of the fourth trumpet. This star not only acts with intelligence, but he is given a key which he uses -- no inanimate star could do this.

We believe that this star is Satan. Some have identified this star as Antichrist; if this is so, it lends support to the view that Antichrist is Satan incarnate, but I do not accept that. My point is that Antichrist is exactly that: he is everything Christ is not, and he is motivated by Satan. The reasons for interpreting this star as Satan are abundant. The prophet Isaiah writes: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" ([Isa. 14:12](#)).

In Luke's Gospel we read: "And he [Jesus] said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" ([Luke 10:18](#)).

That would be like a fallen star, you see. Also, Paul writes: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" ([2Cor. 11:14](#)). These Scriptures confirm the

position that Satan is in view here. John will state later that Satan was put out of heaven and cast to the earth (see [Rev. 12:7-9](#)). If we have established the fact that the "star" is Satan being cast out of heaven, then what does he do? He goes down and takes the key to the abyss, which apparently means that God is permitting him to do so. A key denotes authority and power, and this is given to him of God; it is the permissive will of God.

"The long shaft of the abyss" means the long shaft leading to the abyss. The abyss is the bottomless pit which will be seen in chapter 20, [verse 3](#). The abyss and hades may be synonymous terms, but the abyss and hell are not the same. Our Lord probably referred to the abyss in [Matthew 12:40](#): "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

The Lord speaks here of His descent into the "heart of the earth." The body of Jesus was not actually buried in the earth -- it was put in a new tomb -- and it certainly was not in the heart of the earth. Rather, what we have in this language of Matthew is that He went to the abyss, which apparently is hades or sheol. When the Lord Jesus told about the deaths of the rich man and Lazarus (see [Luke 16:19-31](#)), He made it quite obvious that hades is in two compartments. The rich man died and went to the place of torment. The poor man died and went into Abraham's bosom, or paradise as our Lord called it. The Lord went down there in His death to announce to the saved His victory and that He would be leading them into the presence of God. That is, I believe, what Paul meant when he said that the Lord Jesus ". . . led captivity captive . . ." ([Eph. 4:8](#)). He went to the abyss to announce that His redemption had been wrought.

It behooves us not to be dogmatic where the Scriptures are silent, but there is the thought that a shaft leads from the surface of the earth to the heart of the earth. I know that may sound very much like I am being superstitious. I do accept this idea, but I would not be dogmatic about it. If you have some advance information and can prove to me that it means something else, I would certainly be glad to accept it.

The Lord now holds the key to the abyss (see [Rev. 1:18](#)). Peter tells us the demons are imprisoned there (see [2Pet. 2:4](#)). In [Luke 8:30-31](#) we read: "And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep (abyss)."

The abyss is a very literal place. The idea that heaven and hell are mythological and that heaven is a beautiful isle of somewhere, a Shangri-la, hanging out in space, is not the teaching of the Word of God. The teaching of the Word of God is that heaven is as literal as the place where you live today and that hell is equally as real as the place where you now live.

During the last part of the Great Tribulation, the key to the abyss is given to Satan, and he is given a freedom that he never has had before. I believe this explains why men cannot die during this period. Satan wants to keep them alive; he does not want his army decimated at all.

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit [[Rev. 9:2](#)].

And he opened the long shaft (pit, well) of the abyss, and there came smoke out of the long shaft of the abyss as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened from the smoke of the shaft of the abyss.

Out of the shaft, like a great erupting volcano, will come smoke to cover the entire earth. This is smog of the most vicious type. The literal interpretation of this verse is the correct and most satisfying one.

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads [[Rev. 9:3-4](#)].

And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth, and power was given to them as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said to them in order that they should not hurt the grass of the earth nor any green things, nor any tree, but only (except) the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

To me this beggars description. John uses symbolic language which describes creatures so frightful that this is the only way he could speak of them.

These are locusts, but they are of a very unusual character. As Govett remarks (The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture, pp. 185-186), they are "no common locusts," and he gives the following reasons:

- (1) for they eat no vegetable productions;
- (2) the locusts of the earth have no king ([Prov. 30:27](#)); these have;
- (3) in the plague of Egypt the inspired recorder had said, "Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such" ([Exod. 10:14](#));
- (4) yet they are literal creatures resembling the literal animals named: the lion, the horse, the scorpion, the man.

This is a plague of locusts which is as literal as the plague of locusts in Egypt. Joel prophesied of a coming plague of locusts (see [Joel 1](#)). Again, a working knowledge of the Old Testament is essential to the understanding of Revelation. The difference between the locusts here and the locusts in Joel is the character of the locusts and the object of their destruction. They sting as scorpions, and their objects are evil men.

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man [[Rev. 9:5](#)].

And it was given to them in order that they should not kill them, but in order that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh at man.

The scorpion is shaped like a lobster and lives in damp places. His sting is in his tail; though it is not fatal, it is very painful indeed. This is the picture we are given here. These were mentioned by Joshua when he spoke of the hornet, "And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you . . ." ([Josh. 24:12](#)). Therefore you can see that believers, living during the Great Tribulation who will be acquainted with the Old Testament, will understand what John is talking about regarding these scorpions.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them [[Rev. 9:6](#)].

And in those days shall the men seek death, and shall not find it; and they shall earnestly desire to die, and death fleeth from them.

Satan is given the key to this long shaft (which evidently is what is called sheol in the Old Testament and hell [hades] in the New Testament). The shaft leads to the abyss where the spirits of the dead of the ages past have gone. This is where the Lord Jesus went to announce the redemption that He had wrought on the cross. Satan does not want his crowd to die, and it is only his crowd that are attacked by these locusts. Men during this period try to commit suicide and are unable to do it -- this reveals something of the awfulness of that day. Satan wants them here because there is a battle between light and darkness that is being waged. There are others who think that maybe it is God who will not let these men die because sinful man must face the consequences of his rebellion -- there is no escape. It is not a laughing matter to reject Jesus Christ; it is not a simple thing to ignore Him. People say there are so many important things in this life -- and I am willing to grant that many things take second, third, and fourth place -- but the most important thing is your decision concerning Jesus Christ.

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months [[Rev. 9:7-10](#)].

And the likenesses of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as of chariots of many horses rushing into battle. And they had tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails was their power to hurt men five months.

I am sure you will agree that this is a frightful, weird, and unnatural description. A little closer examination, however, will reveal a striking similarity to the locusts of Palestine,

which I think we need to note. Dr. Vincent makes this comment in his book on Revelation:

The likeness of a locust to a horse, especially to a horse equipped with armor, is so striking that the insect is named in German Heupferd hay-horse, and in Italian cavaletta little horse.

The faces of locusts resemble the faces of men, and the antennae of the locust are compared to a girl's hair. Joel compares the teeth of the locust with those of a lion (see [Joel 1:6](#)). Many have commented on the weird sound that the locust makes. In his Word Studies in the New Testament, Dr. Vincent quotes Olivier, a French writer:

It is difficult to express the effect produced on us by the sight of the whole atmosphere filled on all sides and to a great height by an innumerable quantity of these insects, whose flight was slow and uniform, and whose noise resembled that of rain.

There are those today who have attempted to liken this description of the locust to the airplane. I remember as a young fellow hearing a preacher who said that since the sting of the locust is in the tail, it compares to the rear gunner on a bomber! Well, that all sounds very good, but we have now passed from the propeller plane to the jet plane and into the missile age. Maybe you would want to compare these locusts to the missile. Seriously, I do not want to compare it to anything that is known today, because this is not the weapon that is used today but the weapon that is going to be used in the Great Tribulation period - whatever that is going to be. Our weapons today are so frightful that even Russia and the United States (although they are at opposite poles) are willing to sit down and talk, as long as one thinks the other is as strong or stronger than he is.

"Their power was to hurt men five months." It will be five months of unspeakable agony for those who have been attacked by these unnatural locusts.

And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon [[Rev. 9:11](#)].

They have over them (as) king, the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon.

These locusts are further differentiated from ordinary locusts in that they have a king over them. [Proverbs 30:27](#) says of natural locusts that they have no king. The king or leader of these locusts is probably one of the fallen angels, the chief henchman of Satan, and he is permitted to lead an invasion of earth for the first time. This is something that is going to be rather frightening. His name in Hebrew means "destruction," and in Greek it means "the destroyer." This confirms what Daniel told us, that the demon world of the fallen angels is divided into gradations. I think there are generals, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, and buck privates. In Ephesians we find that the angels of God are divided in the same way.

One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter [[Rev. 9:12](#)].

The one woe is past; behold there come yet two woes after these things.

The first woe introduced to us the last half of the Great Tribulation period, and it had a duration of five months. Apparently, the last two woes will cover the remainder of that period. The warning here indicates that worse things are to follow, and the next trumpet reveals that this was not just an idle warning.

Sixth Trumpet -- Angels Loosed At River Euphrates (9:13-21)

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates [[Rev. 9:13-14](#)].

And the sixth angel blew (sounded) the trumpet. And I heard one (a single) voice out of the horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel having the trumpet, loose the four angels which have been bound at the great river Euphrates.

When the sixth angel blew the trumpet, a command came from the horns of the golden altar. That golden altar speaks of prayer; that is what it spoke of in the tabernacle here on earth. This is where the angel offered prayer at the beginning of the blowing of the trumpets (see [Rev. 8:3](#)). The sixth angel not only blows the trumpet but is also given a command to loose the four angels bound at the river Euphrates. This angel receives in turn his orders from a voice that was there at the horns of the golden altar. It is the voice of Christ. He has now ripped off the seventh seal which led into the trumpets and which will lead into the seven personalities and the seven bowls of wrath.

The angels who are bound are evidently evil. Why would they be bound if they were not evil? Releasing them turns loose a flood tide of destruction on the earth. They were bound away from the others, I believe, because of the enormity of their crime.

Why were they bound at this particular location at the Euphrates River? Though this is rather difficult to explain, the prominence of this area in Scripture cannot be overlooked. The Garden of Eden was somewhere in this section. The sin of man began here. The first murder was committed here. The first war was fought here. Here was where the Flood began and spread over the earth. Here is where the Tower of Babel was erected. To this area were brought the Israelites of the Babylonian captivity. Babylon was the fountainhead of idolatry. And here is the final surge of sin on the earth during the Great Tribulation period.

The Euphrates actually marks the division between East and West. It was Kipling who said that East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. That is true to a certain extent. Perhaps there has been a restraining influence in the past which has kept the hordes of the East from spilling over into the West, but it is going to be broken down. It was Napoleon who made the statement: "China is a sleeping giant, and God pity the generation that wakes her up." Well, we woke her up, and she is very much alive today. China represents one-fourth of the world's population. If you take the peoples of the East, of the Orient, beyond the Euphrates River, you have most of the population of the world. Suppose they start moving? My friend, they are going to move someday. From the time of Alexander the Great, the white man has had his day. Colonialism, as far as the white

man is concerned, is over now, but communism's colonialism is still on the march. The dark races are awakening. They have been held back, and apparently these four angels had something to do with holding them back.

Zechariah locates Babylon as the last stand of false religion (see [Zech. 5](#)). This is where Satan's last stand will take place.

And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them [[Rev. 9:15-16](#)].

And the four angels were loosed, who had been prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they might kill the third of men. And the number of the armies of the cavalry was two ten thousands (myriads) of ten thousands (myriads).

"And the four angels were loosed, who had been prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year." You will have to take that literally, my friend, because I do not know how else you would take it. The very hour is marked out.

"That they might kill the third of men." At the blowing of the sixth trumpet, one-third of the population of mankind will be removed. We have already seen a fourth removed, and now a third is removed. Over one-half of the population of the earth will be destroyed in the Great Tribulation period. No wonder that the Lord Jesus said, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ." ([Matt. 24:22](#)).

The size of the army is stupendous. It is numbered at 200 million. China and India and Japan could easily put that many in the field tomorrow. The great population is in the East today. God help the white man, my friend, when these angels are removed -- he will not stand a chance.

What is spoken of here in this passage is the wholesale invasion of the earth by the demon world represented in the locusts. Now they are motivated to a world war. Actually, we have never yet had a real world war in which every nation was involved, but that will take place in the Great Tribulation Period. Are these 200 million human beings? I have so far indicated that they could be, but frankly, I believe that what we have here is the invasion by the demon world, which is a further result of Satan's opening the door of the shaft of the bottomless pit. The following description of these horsemen further confirms this fact.

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

By these three was the third part of the men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths [[Rev. 9:17-18](#)].

And, thus (after this manner) I saw the horses in the (my) vision, and those that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire (fiery red), and hyacinth, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire, and smoke and brimstone. By these plagues was the third of men killed, by the fire, by the smoke, and by the brimstone that proceeded out of their mouths.

Many suppose these to be tanks. How do they know that tanks will be used in the Great Tribulation period? We are talking about a period that is in the future. Modern tanks reveal that this may well be, but I have a notion that they will have something more refined and sophisticated in that period.

Notice that the colors are as striking as the horsemen are unnatural. "Fire" is fiery red; "hyacinth" is the same color as the flower -- dull, dark blue; "brimstone" is light yellow.

The horse is the animal of war (see [Job 39:19-25](#)). The underworld is now making war on mankind. These creatures from the underworld are unnatural. They are probably demons or demon-controlled. We are given a literal description of them. In his book on Revelation, William R. Newell makes this very timely observation, "Believe, and you scarcely need any comment." The problem with men who come to Revelation and say that it is difficult to understand and impossible to interpret is that they do not believe it. If you simply believe it and read it, it is very clear. Hellish forces will be at work during this period.

These three plagues mentioned here are literal plagues. The fire is literal, the smoke is literal, and the brimstone is literal. The same thing took place at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. I believe this world during the Great Tribulation period will actually be worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. People talk about homosexuality attaining respectability in our day. Well, it was the accepted life-style in Sodom and Gomorrah, but homosexuals went out of business -- God put them out of business. If you think God is going to permit mankind to go into eternity an unnatural creature, you are wrong.

At this point one-third of the population is killed. One-third of nature had already been affected, but mankind had not been touched with a judgment of this magnitude. If the population of the world were [1.5](#) billion, this would mean that 500 million would be slain. Remember that a fourth part had been slain under the fourth seal. This terrible decimation of the earth's population seemed incongruous with all of history until the atomic bomb fell upon Hiroshima. Since then men have been using more frightening language than that of Revelation. They now talk of the total decimation of earth's inhabitants. But the Lord Jesus said that He will not permit it: ". . . except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ." ([Matt. 24:22](#)) -- and the human race would commit suicide if it could.

For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt [[Rev. 9:19](#)].

For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads, and by them they hurt.

These are unnatural horses which are able to kill with their mouths. The weirdest feat of all is that, instead of horses' hair for tails, they have serpents which are also used in destroying mankind.

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts [[Rev. 9:20-21](#)].

And the rest of men who were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold and silver and copper and stone and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

"Sorceries" is the Greek word pharmakeion, from which we get our English word pharmacy. Pharmacy means "drugs." What were called drugstores when I was a boy are today called pharmacies. The Great Tribulation will be a period when the use of drugs will not be controlled. Drugs will play a large part in the lives of the unsaved and will serve several purposes. Drugs will enable them to bear the judgments of the Great Tribulation period. I am sure that many a person will turn to drugs when he is stung or bitten by these unnatural creatures. Although they will not die, they will feel like they are going to die, and as a result, they will take drugs to overcome the pain and help them endure the Great Tribulation.

Drugs will also figure largely in the religion of that day. There will be a regular drug culture and drug religion in the days of the Great Tribulation period. What we are seeing today is very small in comparison to what it will be then. People will resort to everything that will deaden the pain or lift them out of the trouble of that time. Liquor will certainly be very prominent as it is even now. I want to share with you a statement by Dr. J. A. Seiss from his book (The Apocalypse, p. 106) published about 1906. The reason I mention the date is that it seems like he wrote it yesterday or that maybe he was preparing it for tomorrow's edition of your local paper. This is his comment on the word sorceries:

We have only to think of the use of alcoholic stimulants, of opium, of tobacco, of the range of cosmetics and medicaments to increase love attractions, of resorts to the pharmacopoeia in connection with sensuality -- of the magical agents and treatments alleged to come from the spirit-world for the benefit of people in this -- of the thousand impositions in the way of medicines and remedial agents, encouraging mankind to reckless transgression with the hope of easily repairing the damages of nature's penalties - - of the growing prevalence of crime induced by these things, setting loose and stimulating to activity the vilest passions, which are eating out the moral sense of society -- for the beginnings of that moral degeneracy to which the seer here alludes as characteristic of the period when the sixth trumpet is sounded.

You would think that he had written that for today, but in his day there was no great drug culture nor were drugs and alcohol as big a problem as they are today. Drugs are used today in practically every modern cult which uses sex as a drawing card.

We are told here that they were guilty not only of sorceries, of indulging in drunkenness and in drugs, but also of fornications which lead to thefts. It is alarming the way that adultery is being practiced in the United States. It is promoted as an evidence of our liberty and of the tremendous advancement of civilization! It is interesting that, instead of playing the requiem, this crowd wants to sing and dance and say that the race is improving.

Sorceries and fornication and robbery are going to be increased and a greater emphasis placed upon them. I believe that the Antichrist will use all three of these to bring mankind into subjection to himself. Mankind will be easily lured in that day. Under the influence of drugs, he will accept anything. One of the reasons that our contemporary nightclubs push liquor is not only for the money that is in it, but it also makes their entertainers acceptable. A very inferior singer or comedian goes over well if you've had two cocktails; and if you've had three, then he is a star. Drugs and liquor will put Antichrist over. Paul wrote: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" ([2Thess. 2:9-10](#)).

I believe that the gospel will go out to every creature before the Rapture, and certainly each one is going to hear it during the Great Tribulation period. What Paul describes here will only happen to those who have rejected the Word of God. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" ([2Thess. 2:11-12](#)).

The moment that you reject the gospel and shut your heart to God, you are wide open for the big lie when it comes. This is the reason so many today fall for everything that comes along. Someone has said that those who stand for nothing will fall for anything. This is it exactly: those today who are not standing for the Word of God are easy prey for the cults.

Chapter 10

THEME: Interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets

Chapter 10 is the hiatus, the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This chapter begins the second of a series of interludes. Between the sixth and seventh seals, there was an interlude as two groups were redeemed and sealed during the Great Tribulation. Here, between the sixth and seventh trumpets, we have an interlude as three personalities are introduced. In this chapter the mighty angel is described, and in the first fourteen verses of chapter 11, the two witnesses are introduced, though not identified.

The Strong Angel With The Little Book (10:1-7)

In verse 1 the mighty angel comes from heaven and is introduced.

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire [[Rev. 10:1](#)].

Let me give you my own translation:

And I saw another strong (powerful) angel coming down out of heaven clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

There has been definite disagreement among outstanding and fundamental Bible expositors as to the identity of the mighty angel. Godet, Vincent, Pettingill, DeHaan, Ironside, Walter Scott, and William Kelly all identify the strong angel as Christ. Newell and others consider him to be just an angel of great power and authority, but not Christ. Dr. John Walvoord takes this viewpoint, and Vernon McGee takes it also. If you go with either crowd, you will be in good company. In the first group are some men I have great respect for and whom I love in the Lord. I have personally known three of those men, and they were my dear friends. If you follow them, it will be all right, and you will be in good company; but if you want to be right, you want to come along with me on this!

There is ample evidence to show that this angel is only a mighty angel. Christ does not appear in Revelation as an angel. It is true that in the Old Testament the preincarnate Christ was seen as the Angel of the Lord. But after He took upon Himself our humanity, after He died and rose again and received a glorified body, we now see Him in the place of great power and glory yonder at God's right hand. We never see Him as an angel again. When He was here in His humanity, He was not an angel -- He was a man. Therefore, He is revealed in the Book of Revelation as the glorified Christ, as the postincarnate Christ. He is exalted to the nth degree. It is well to keep before us constantly that this book is the unveiling of Jesus Christ. New glories of His person and of His power and performance are unfolding in each chapter. He is now the One judging a Christ-rejecting earth.

"And I saw another strong angel." Another means that it is another of the same kind. The other strong angel to whom we were introduced was back in [Revelation 5:2](#). There is no argument there; it is not Christ. It is the livery of this angel (that is, the way in which he is garbed) which has led to identify him as Christ. Though all angels are the servants of Christ, in this final book of the Bible, this is evidently the special envoy of Christ, bearing all the credentials of His exalted position. He comes down out of heaven from the presence of Christ, the One who is in the midst of the throne.

He is "clothed with a cloud." This is his uniform as a special envoy from Christ. The clouds of glory are associated with the second coming of Christ, but the angel described here is not coming in clouds of glory, but he is clothed with a cloud. Furthermore, this is not the second coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom; rather, this angel makes the announcement that He is coming soon. Angels, you recall, announced His first coming, and they will announce His second coming to the earth.

"And the rainbow was upon his head." This is the cap for his uniform and is a reminder of Gods' covenant with man. Although the judgments have come, thick and fast, weird

and wild -- it beggars language to describe them -- this rainbow indicates that God will not send a flood to destroy man again.

"And his face was as the sun." This is his badge of identification. This is the signature of the glorified Christ (see [Rev. 1:16](#)). It does not follow that this one must therefore be the Son of God. Moses' face shone after he had been in the presence of God (see [Exod. 34:29](#)). This angel's face is shining because he has come out from the presence of Christ. You will recall that the raiment of the angels at the resurrection of Christ also shone (see [Luke 24:4](#)). The angel of [Revelation 18:1](#) is a light giver, as the sun and moon, yet no one asserts that he is Christ. Also, I take it that this angel in chapter 10 is not Christ, but he is what it says: an angel, another great, mighty angel.

"And his feet as pillars of fire." This is still part of his uniform. He has come to make a special and solemn announcement of coming judgment. All of these features of identification are his credentials and connect him to the person of Christ as His special envoy. The Lord Jesus is running everything at this particular point. He is the Judge of all the earth.

And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices [[Rev. 10:2-3](#)].

And he had in his hand a little book opened; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice as (when) a lion roareth: and when he cried the seven thunders spoke their own voices.

There are several reasons that I believe that this little book or scroll is the seven-sealed book which we have seen before. One reason is simply because it is the only book that has been before us, and it is not identified in any other way than it is called "a little book." Frankly, a different word is used here for this book instead of the Greek word *biblion* which is used for the seven-sealed book. But that would not preclude the possibility of its being the same book.

This little book, if it is the same as the seven-sealed book, was originally in the hands of the Father in heaven (see [Rev. 5:1](#)). It should be noted how it is first transferred to the nail-pierced hands of God the Son. It was given to the Lord Jesus who was the only One who could open it. The breaking of the seven seals opened the book; and the seven trumpets, six of which have already been blown, are still part of what is in the book. After He removes the seals, the Lord Jesus Christ in turn transfers the book to the angel, who gives it finally to John to eat.

This is the book of the title deed of the earth, and it contains the judgments of the Great Tribulation by which the Lord Jesus is coming to power. The book is now open, and the judgments are on display. This book is the angel's authority for claiming both the sea and the earth for Christ. He puts one foot on the sea and the other foot upon the earth, and he is claiming both for God. In [Leviticus 25:23](#) the Lord gave instructions to Israel concerning the land He had given them: "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."

It may be that you think you own a pretty good piece of the real estate of this earth. You hold the title deed. The title has been transferred down through the years to you, and you paid good money for it. You feel it is yours. I say that you are wrong because your title doesn't go back far enough. Sometime in the past, somebody stole it from the Indians. The Indians got it from somebody else -- or maybe they just walked in and occupied vacant property. But to whom does it belong? My friend, your property belongs to God, and no matter who you are, you haven't paid Him for it. The earth is His and the fulness thereof (see [Ps. 24:1](#)).

God not only claims the land, but He claims the sea as well as the land. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" ([Ps. 8:6-8](#)).

God says, "I own the seas also, as well as the land, and I have given this to you. I put man on the earth." Man is a tenant on the earth -- some of us haven't paid our rent lately -- but we are in a little world that God created. It belongs to Him, and man hasn't been able to pay Him for it yet.

This angel now claims the earth and the sea for the Lord Jesus Christ. When Columbus landed on an island here in the Western Hemisphere, he got off the ship and went to the shore and planted the flag of Spain, claiming the island in the name of the king and queen of the country that had sent him out. That method has been used from time to time. When men came to unoccupied territory, they claimed it. With the title deed of the earth in his hand, and by placing his right foot on the sea and his left foot upon the earth, in a great voice this angel claims all for Christ. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ through judgment. As Creator and Redeemer, the world belongs to Him.

The book is described here as "a little book" because the time of the Great Tribulation is not going to be long. We have come here to sort of the halfway mark, and we are going to be told that there is not much more time left. There is not much more to write down, and it has to be a little book. We are told in [Romans 9:28](#): "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

The Great Tribulation is really a short time. The Lord Jesus said it was a brief time. Daniel labeled it as seven years, which certainly is not long.

The "seven thunders" is God's amen to the angel's claim. [Psalm 29:3](#) says: "The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters."

And in [Job 37:5](#) we read: "God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend."

Dr. Vincent makes this very enlightening comment, "The Jews were accustomed to speak of thunder as 'the seven voices.' " In [Psalm 29](#), although it is a brief psalm, "the voice of the LORD" occurs seven times. Israel spoke of thunder as being the voice of the Lord, the seven voices of God.

We need to take time to study these things to find out what they mean instead of trying to cut off the corners, trim them down, and make them fit into some system of prophecy. I am reminded of the lady who went into a shoe store, and when the clerk asked her what size she wore, she replied, "I can get a four on, but really five is my size, but since six feels so good on my foot, I always buy a six!" That is just like some systems of biblical interpretation: they trim Scripture down to fit into the system. Let John mean what he is saying. These seven thunders here are the voice of God. I think it is the voice of the Lord Jesus now in heaven, confirming what this angel has claimed because He is going to come to power on this earth.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not [[Rev. 10:4](#)].

And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders spoke and write them not.

The seven thunders therefore were intelligible. This confirmation was also a statement. John was a scribe, and he was taking down the visions as they were given to him (see [Rev. 1:11](#)). He was about to write what the seven thunders had spoken -- he heard it, and they were audible words -- but he was forbidden to do so. Since this is a book of revelation, why is there something concealed? This is the only place in the Book of Revelation where anything is sealed -- nothing else is. God makes it very clear at the end of the book that He has told everything. He is not holding back anything from man today. At the end, John writes: "And he saith unto me, Seal not the saying of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" ([Rev. 22:10](#)).

Yet this particular message of the seven thunders John is not permitted to write down. This is quite interesting.

If this angel were Christ, John probably would have fallen down and worshiped him. He did so when he saw the glorified Christ in the first chapter of Revelation. Evidently, the reason John did not fall down and worship him was because this is only an angel.

It is a mere assumption to presume to know what the thunders spoke. There are wild speculators who have made ridiculous guesses. Vitringa interpreted the seven thunders as the seven Crusades. Danbuz made them the seven nations which received the Reformation. Elliott believed them to be the pope's bull against Luther. Several of the cults have presumed to reveal the things which were uttered. The Lord Jesus Christ said to John, "Seal them up. Don't write this down." They remain to this day a secret which you don't know, I don't know, and no man knows. If we attempt to say what was spoken, in a few years we will find ourselves to be ridiculous. Why not leave it as it is and draw the lesson from it? Although Jesus Christ is being revealed in this Book, there are a great many things that God is not telling us.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer [[Rev. 10:5-6](#)].

And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware by (in) Him that liveth for ever and ever (into the ages of the ages), who created heaven and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be no longer delay.

This angel makes it clear that he could not be Christ, since he takes an oath by the eternal Creator. He "lifted up his right hand to heaven, and sware" -- he took an oath by the eternal Creator -- "by Him that liveth for ever and ever." If he were Christ, he would swear by himself. The writer to the Hebrews says: "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself" ([Heb. 6:13](#)). God could not swear by anything else because there is none greater than God. The angel swore by another, not by himself, because he is not God, and therefore he is not the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" ([John 1:1-2](#)). We have this statement from the Lord Jesus Himself: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" ([John 8:58](#)). Christ is the Creator. Listen to [John 1:3](#): "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." In [Colossians 1:16](#) we read: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." The angel takes an oath in the name of Christ who is in heaven; and as Christ's representative, he claims it all for Christ.

Notice that in my translation I have changed the last part of [verse 6](#) from "that there should be time no longer" to "that there shall be no longer delay." Actually, it does not mean that there shall be time no longer. Rather, this is the glad announcement from heaven to God's saints on earth who are in the midst of all this trouble and who wonder how long it will last. The meaning is that now it will be a very brief time until Christ returns. It is a confirmation of the words of Christ in His Olivet Discourse: "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" ([Matt. 24:22](#)). The angel is telling the elect that it is going to be long. He is saying to them, "Don't worry. He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Why? Because they are sealed, and they are going to make it through the Great Tribulation period.

This is likewise in answer to the prayers of the martyrs in [Revelation 6:10](#), and also it is the fulfillment of what we call the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come" (See [Matt. 6:10](#)). The Kingdom is coming at this point in time in the Book of Revelation but it does not refer to the time I am writing this. I do not know, and no one on earth knows, whether or not Christ is coming soon.

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets [[Rev. 10:7](#)].

But in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he is about to blow (sound the trumpet), and the mystery of God is finished, as He gave the glad tidings to His servants, the prophets.

This all takes place when the seventh angel is preparing to blow the trumpet. This would indicate that the seventh trumpet brings us to the conclusion of the Great Tribulation. It is at this time that the mystery of God is finally made clear. Many single facets of this mystery have been given as the total answer, yet it seems that this is greater than any one and is the sum total of all.

There is a mystery concerning the nation Israel, judgment, suffering, injustice, the silence of God, and the coming Kingdom. The basic problem is this: Why did God permit evil, and why has He tolerated it for so long? Do you want to know something? I have studied theology for many years, and I know the answers that men give, but God has not handed in His answer yet. He is going to do so someday. There are many things I cannot answer, and I am disturbed that we have some brethren who seem to have all the answers. Candidly, no one has all the answers. As this passage of Scripture indicates, the fact that there is something that we don't know about because it has been sealed means that God has a whole lot to tell us yet. When we get into His presence, we will find out.

May I say this to you: although I do not know the answer to your problem, I know the One who does. I don't have the answer to all my questions either, but I put my hand in His, and He says to me, "My child, walk with Me through the dark. It is going to be all right. We are going to come out into the light, and then you will understand." I suggest that you put your hand into the hand of the One who is your Creator and your Redeemer, very man of very man and very God of very God.

John Eats The Little Book (10:8-11)

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth [[Rev. 10:8](#)].

And the voice which I heard out of heaven, (I heard) it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

This order comes from Christ in heaven as He is directing every operation recorded in the Book of Revelation. He is in full charge. Revelation is the book that glorifies our wonderful Savior. He is the Judge of all the earth here, and we see Him as God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name. If the voice here is not Christ's, then He has given the order to the angel to speak from heaven.

John has apparently returned to the earth in spirit, because the little book which was formerly in the hand of God the Father is now transferred to John.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter [[Rev. 10:9-10](#)].

And I went away to the angel, saying to him, Give to me the little book, and he said to me, Take, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be as sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel, and ate it up. And it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. And when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

John becomes a participant in the great drama which is unfolding before us. He is required to do a very strange thing, one that has a very typical meaning. He eats the little book at the instructions of the angel, and the results are bittersweet. Eating the little book means to receive the Word of God with faith. This is the teaching of the Word of God, for in [Jeremiah 15:16](#) we read: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts." Jeremiah likens the appropriation of the Word to eating it.

Ezekiel does the same thing: "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness" ([Ezek. 3:1-3](#)). The "roll" here is not a bread roll, but the scroll of that day. Ezekiel said that he ate it, and it was just like cake. That is what the Word of God is to the believer. In [Proverbs 16:24](#) we are told: "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." In [Psalm 119](#), the psalm which glorifies the Word of God, we find: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth" ([Ps. 119:103](#)).

The part of the Word of God taken by John was judgment. It was sweet because the future is sweet. In [Genesis 18:17](#) we read, "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do . . . ?" In effect He was saying to Abraham, "We are friends, and I would like to tell you what I am going to do." It is sweet to know what God is going to do, but when you find out that judgment is coming, it is bitter. John eagerly received the Word of God, but when he saw that more judgment was to follow, it brought travail of soul and sorrow of heart. It was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his digestive system. If you and I can take delight in reading this section of the Word of God and the judgments that are to fall upon the earth, then we need to do a great deal of praying to get the mind of God. It is sweet to know the Book of Revelation and what God intends to do, but when we find out that judgment is coming to the Christ-rejecting world around us, we cannot rejoice in that. The prophecy becomes bitter.

There is another very real application of this. Many folk begin the study of prophecy with enthusiasm, but when they find that it is applicable to their life and that it makes demands on them personally, they lose interest, and it becomes a bitter thing. Many people say, "I don't want to hear about the Book of Revelation. I don't like prophecy. It frightens me!" May I say to you that it is supposed to do that, but it should be in your mouth sweet as honey. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who like to study prophecy because of the natural curiosity to know the future, but they will discover that there is nothing in the

Word of God that ministers more to a holy life than the thoughtful study of prophecy. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself . . ." ([1John 3:3](#)). To be a student of prophecy and live a dirty life will only lead to abnormality. The reason we hear so much abnormality in the interpretation of prophecy in our day is that the Word of God is not having its way in the hearts and lives of the folk who study it. It is unfortunate that people will get interested in prophecy but not in Christian living.

Years ago after I had recently come to California, I went to see Dr. Gaebelein who was visiting here. He said to me, "How do you like your church in California?" I told him, "It's wonderful. I enjoy it, but there is something strange out here. [I have since learned that this is true everywhere, but I had not detected it before.] I can teach the Book of Revelation in my church, and it will fill up on Wednesday nights. But if I teach the Epistle to the Romans, I empty the church." I never shall forget what Dr. Gaebelein said in his broken Prussian accent, "Brother McGee, you are going to find that a great many of the saints are more interested in Antichrist than they are in Christ." I have discovered that he was accurate.

[And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings \[\[Rev. 10:11\]\(#\)\].](#)

And they say to me, It is necessary for you to prophesy again against peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

You can be sure of one thing, that John was properly integrated. He believed that all nations, all peoples, all tongues, and all colors ought to hear the Word of God. They need to hear it because they need to be warned that judgment is coming. If they go through the Great Tribulation, they will soon recognize that it is not the Millennium -- in fact, they will feel as if they have entered hell itself. This is the part that made John sad. This is the reason this little book became bitter to John: he must prophesy against many before Christ comes to His Kingdom. Much prophecy is to follow. We are not quite halfway through the Book of Revelation. Prophecy about the nations and peoples is necessarily against them; it is of judgment to come. This new series of prophecies will begin in chapter 12, and it will reveal the fact that there was a great deal more to say.

My friend, the study of prophecy will have a definite effect upon your life: it will either bring you closer to Christ, or it will take you farther from Him.

Chapter 11

THEME: Interlude between sixth and seventh trumpets; the seventh trumpet blown

In the first fourteen verses, chapter 11 continues with the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, and in the concluding verses, we have the blowing of the seventh trumpet. In this chapter we learn that forty-two months remain of the Times of the Gentiles and that there are two witnesses who will prophesy for forty-two months. We also have the second woe and then the blowing of the seventh trumpet.

This chapter brings us back to Old Testament ground. The temple, the dealing with time periods, and the distinction which is made between Jews and Gentiles all indicate that we

are again under the Old Testament economy. Chronologically, the seventh trumpet brings us to the return of Christ at the end of the Great Tribulation period.

Date For The Ending Of "the Times Of The Gentiles" (11:1-2)

Here we deal with an indication of projected time periods for the close of the Great Tribulation.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months [[Rev. 11:1-2](#)].

Let me give you my own translation:

And there was given me a reed like a rod, saying, Rise and measure the temple (holy place) of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. And the court which is without the temple cast out [Gr.: ekbale, throw out] and measure it not; for it is given to the nations, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

We are dealing here with that period that the Lord Jesus spoke of in [Luke 21:24](#), ". . . and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." A great many people thought that when Israel captured Jerusalem, that was the end of the Time of the Gentiles. My friend, Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles. All you need to do is walk down the streets of the old city, and if you see a Jew, you let me know because I did not see any there myself. All other races are there. Non-Jewish religious groups are all over the place; they have built holy places everywhere in the old city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles. But when you get into the Great Tribulation period and come to the last half of it, the Time of the Gentiles will run out in forty-two months. Forty-two months is one-half of the Great Tribulation period.

"And there was given me a reed like a rod." Every time you see the beginning of measurements, in either the Old or New Testament, it indicates that God is beginning to deal with the nation Israel (see [Jer. 31:38-39](#); [Zech. 2](#)). This reed is like a rod; a rod is used by a shepherd. In [Psalm 2:9](#) we see that a rod is used for chastisement and judgment: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." What we are dealing with here is a measurement of time given for the Time of the Gentiles, after which judgment will come upon them. The rod is also for comfort: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" ([Ps. 23:4](#)). Therefore, we have both judgment and solace in this chapter.

"The temple of God" is limited to the Holy Place (notice that "holy place" is the literal rendering) and the Holy of Holies. The temple of God places us back on Old Testament ground, for there is no temple given to the church. The church is a temple of the Holy Spirit today; that is, believers (not a building) are the temple of the Holy Spirit: "In whom

all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" ([Eph. 2:21-22](#)).

"The altar" refers to the golden altar of prayer since the altar for burnt offering was not in the temple proper but in the outer court.

Even the worshipers are to be measured. John is told to rise and measure, not only the Holy Place and the altar, but also "them that worship therein." God does count the number of those who worship Him.

"And the court which is without the temple cast out [Gr.: ekbale, throw out] and measure it not." This excludes all that does not belong to the temple proper. The altar of burnt offering (and also the brazen laver) would be outside the temple. Since this altar was a picture of the Cross of Christ, it would seem that the implication is that the gospel of the Cross of Christ will still be available to all mankind during the intensity of this brief crisis. It is not to be measured, and it will still be available.

"For it is given to the nations [that is, the Gentiles]" declares that although this period still belongs to the Gentiles, their dominion is limited to forty-two months. As we have said, this confirms the words of the Lord Jesus in [Luke 21:24](#).

"Forty and two months" is the three and one-half year period identified with the last half of the Great Tribulation period. We find this repeated in [Revelation 13:5](#): "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." This is the last half of the reign of Antichrist here upon this earth. This period is mentioned again in chapter 12, [verse 14](#): "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." "A time, times [dual], and half a time" means three and one-half years.

Daniel adopts this unit of measurement for this period: "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" ([Dan. 7:25](#)). "A time and times and the dividing of time" -- again, this means three and one-half years. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" ([Dan. 12:11](#)). Twelve hundred and ninety days is three and one-half years. We have yet another reference in Daniel which says: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" ([Dan 9:27](#)). Here the Great Tribulation is divided into two equal parts. This "week" of Daniel is seven years, and this seven-year period is the Seventieth Week of Daniel, or the Great Tribulation period.

Duration Of The Prophecy Of The Two Witnesses (11:3-12)

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth [[Rev. 11:3](#)].

And I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand, two hundred and three score [60] days, clothed in sackcloth.

There is a great deal of difference of opinion as to the identity of the two witnesses. They are introduced to us without any suggestion as to who they are. Godet makes this comment: "They are one of the most startling features of the book." If the identity of these two was essential for the understanding of this book, I think there would have been some indication given about their persons. It is always in these areas that the sensational preachers concentrate. They can tell you what the seven thunders said (John was told not to write it down, and he didn't), and they can tell you the names of these two witnesses. Those who have espoused the historical view of Revelation have named such men as John Huss, Pope Sylvester, Waldenson, and the two Testaments. You can see that you could come up with almost anything from that viewpoint. Men who hold the futurist view -- which is the view I hold -- are not in complete agreement as to who they are. Seiss and Govett say that they are Enoch and Elijah. Govett (*The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture*, p. 225) says that The Gospel of Nicodemus contains the following statement:

I am Enoch who pleased God, and was translated by him. And this is Elijah the Tishbite. We are also to live to the end of the age: but then we are about to be sent by God to resist Antichrist, and be slain by him, and to rise after three days, and to be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord.

Dean Alford, Walter Scott, and Donald Grey Barnhouse state that they are Moses and Elijah. William Newell does a very smart thing -- he does not even attempt to identify them. There is also the possibility that they are two unknown witnesses -- that is, they have had no previous existence, and they have not yet appeared on the scene.

That they are human witnesses seems certain from the description given of them. Two is the required number of witnesses according to the Law: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death" ([Deut. 17:6](#)).

The Lord Jesus said the same thing relative to the church: "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" ([Matt. 18:16](#)). Scripture has always required two witnesses to bear testimony to anything before it was to be heard. Therefore, we can definitely say that these witnesses are human beings and that there are two of them. These are the two things we know for sure.

It seems to me to be almost certain that Elijah is one of them, since it was predicted that he would return: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" ([Mal. 4:5](#)). It is also recorded in Matthew's Gospel: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" ([Matt. 17:11](#)). It would seem that we can say with a certain degree of assurance that Elijah is one of the witnesses. It is said in [verse 4](#) that these two witnesses are two lampstands standing before "the God of the earth." This was a favorite expression of Elijah who walked out onto the pages of Scripture, saying, ". . . As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand . . ." ([1Kings 17:1](#)). These witnesses are two

lampstands; they are lights in the world. The presence of Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration further suggests this, but it would necessitate the second witness being Moses, which is more difficult to sustain, and after all, the Mount of Transfiguration is not the only point of similarity.

I would like to make a suggestion about which I will not be dogmatic nor will I argue. My suggestion is that John the Baptist is the second witness. He was the forerunner of Christ at His first coming. He was similar to Elijah in manner and message. I am sure that those two fellows would get along with each other. Both knew what it was to oppose the forces of darkness and to stand alone for God against impossible odds. They surely have had good training in the past. John the Baptist would be the witness of the New Testament, as Elijah would be the witness of the Old Testament. John the Baptist actually was not part of the church, the bride of Christ. He very candidly said that he was a friend of the bridegroom. He wasn't a bride; he was a friend of the bridegroom.

It seems unlikely that Enoch would be one of the witnesses since he was a Gentile. The very fact that he did not die does not qualify him for the office for, by the time you come to the Great Tribulation period, the church has already been translated, and some of them were translated without dying.

Let us say with some assurance that Elijah is one of the witnesses. As to who the other one is, your guess is as good as mine.

"And they shall prophecy a thousand, two hundred and three score days." The significant feature about the two witnesses is not their identity but the time they appear. Is this during the first half or the last half of the Great Tribulation? The first half seems to fit the text more accurately because they testify until the Beast appears, and then they are martyred.

"Clothed in sackcloth" is the garb better suited to the period of the Law than of grace. It is becoming both to Elijah and to John the Baptist.

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed [[Rev. 11:4-5](#)].

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wishes to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if anyone wishes to hurt them, thus must he be killed.

Everything here is associated with the Old Testament. The two olive trees immediately suggest the vision in [Zechariah 4](#). There the lampstands are two individuals, Joshua and Zerubbabel, who were enabled by the Holy Spirit to stand against insurmountable difficulties. The explanation is found in the words, ". . . Not by might, nor by power [or, not by brain, nor by brawn], but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" ([Zech. 4:6](#)). The Holy Spirit will be present during the Great Tribulation period.

These two witnesses are lights before the powers of darkness. These men are accorded miraculous power to bring fire down from heaven -- they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Here again, the suggestion is strongly in favor of Elijah (see [1Kings 18:38](#); [2Kings 1:10](#)). Also, John made an announcement about One baptizing with fire (see [Matt. 3:11](#)).

These two witnesses are immortal and immune to all attacks until their mission is completed. My friend, it is encouraging to know that all of God's men are immortal until He has accomplished His purpose through them. This is one reason that I have had a weak and feeble faith through several cancer surgeries and other physical problems. I will be honest with you, there were times when I wondered if I would make it through or not. But I prayed to God and asked other people to pray that I might be enabled to finish the taping of our five-year "Thru the Bible" radio broadcasts -- and He has answered that prayer. That all of God's men are immortal until God is through with them is a wonderful comforting thought for today. And when He is through with you, He will remove you from the earth.

These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy; and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will [[Rev. 11:6](#)].

These have the authority [Gr.: exousian -- power] to shut up the heaven, that the rain may not wet during the days of their prophecy; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they wish.

These two witnesses are granted unlimited authority. They control rainfall on the earth, and they are able to turn the water into blood. This certainly reminds us of both Elijah and Moses. This is the verse that has caused certain outstanding men to decide that Elijah, who was the man that stopped the rain, and Moses, who was the one who brought the plagues upon Egypt, will be the two. They may have good ground for that, but anything you say about these two witnesses is speculation.

"And to smite the earth" -- they are given the same power Christ will have when He returns (see [Rev. 19:15](#)).

"With every plague" suggests the plagues Moses imposed on Egypt, but the plagues here are greater in number as the territory is more vast.

"As often as they wish" reveals the confidence God places in these faithful servants. God cannot trust you and me like this. He cannot trust some of us with money; certainly He wasn't able to trust me with very much. He does not trust us with power, and this is the reason that He removes men from office after a period of time -- time is always on His side -- because He cannot trust men with power. It is a good thing that many of us do not have it.

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them [[Rev. 11:7](#)].

And when they shall have finished their testimony, the wild beast that cometh up out of the abyss, shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.

The witnesses will finish their testimony. In the midst of the week, the Antichrist, who is the Beast, the Man of Sin who is moving to power, will bring back first the Roman Empire. Then, when he gets the whole world under his control, he will not hesitate to overcome and destroy these two witnesses. At that time he will be permitted to do so. This is the temporary victory of darkness over light, evil over righteousness, hell over heaven, and Satan over God, because God is going to let Satan loose during this period.

These witnesses live up to their name. Martus is the Greek word for "witness"; we get our English word martyr from that.

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified [[Rev. 11:8](#)].

And their dead bodies (carcasses) shall lie upon the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

These men are not given even a decent burial. This reveals the crude, cold barbarism of the last days which will be covered with but a thin veneer of culture. There is a strange resemblance to the sadistic curiosity which placed two dead men, Lenin and Stalin, on display in Red Square in Moscow. They have removed Stalin, but at this writing Lenin is still there, and I understand that that body is beginning to deteriorate.

The word used for bodies (carcasses) denotes the contempt and hatred the world will have for the two witnesses. They are treated as dead animals.

"The great city" is Jerusalem. It is likened unto Sodom by Isaiah (see [Isa. 1:10](#)). It is called Egypt because the world has entered into every fiber of its life -- social and political. It is conclusively identified as Jerusalem by the sad designation, "where also their Lord was crucified."

And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves [[Rev. 11:9](#)].

And out of the peoples, and tribes, and tongues, and nations do some gaze upon their dead bodies (carcasses) three days and one half and shall not permit their dead bodies (carcasses) to be put in a tomb.

After Christ was crucified, even Pilate permitted His friends to take down the body and give it a respectable burial, but not so with the two witnesses. The world will be startled to hear they are dead. Some will be skeptical. Apparently, this future generation will have something that corresponds to a television camera, and a satellite will carry the picture all over the world, so that people everywhere will be able to look upon the features of these men for three and one-half days. The morbid curiosity of a godless society will relish the opportunity of gazing with awe upon these dead bodies. This is the worst indignity that a depraved world could vent upon the men who denounced them and their wicked ways. Perhaps the witnesses had predicted their resurrection. We are not told that, but they might have. To prevent the possibility of another empty tomb, there was no burial. They will decide to just leave the bodies out there and keep the camera on them. I think all the

television networks will have their cameras trained on these dead men. Three and one-half days they are lying there.

And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth [[Rev. 11:10](#)].

And the dwellers upon the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented (vexed) the dwellers on the earth.

The death of the two witnesses is an occasion for high carnival on the earth. The world engages in a modern Christmas and Mardi Gras, both rolled into one. The world has adopted the philosophy, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Dr. Newell describes it like this: "Now comes the real revelation of the heart of man: glee, horrid, insane, inhuman, hellish, ghoulish glee!"

"And shall send gifts one to another" indicates a lovely occasion on the surface, but this is the Devil's Christmas. The modern celebration of Christmas gets farther and farther from the birth of Christ and closer and closer to paganism. The day will come when it will be anti-Christian -- it is almost that now. Here is the celebration of what Antichrist has done instead of the celebration of the coming of Christ to Bethlehem.

Then something happens --

And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them [[Rev. 11:11](#)].

And after the three days and a half the breath (spirit) of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them.

While the world is celebrating in jubilation the death of these witnesses and while the television cameras are focused upon them, the witnesses will stand on their feet. And all of the networks will regret that they had their cameras pointed to them, because they will not really want to give the news as it is. The scriptural word for resurrection is used here -- the Greek word histeme -- "they stood upon their feet." These witnesses are among the Tribulation saints who have part in the first resurrection (see [Rev. 20:4-6](#)). Any news like this would be a scoop, but I am sure that all of the networks will have their cameras on it. By that time they may well have some new gadget which will make television, as we know it, look very much antiquated and out of place.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them [[Rev. 11:12](#)].

And they heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up here, and they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.

They are caught up into heaven. We have the resurrection of the two witnesses in [verse 11](#); we have the ascension of the two witnesses in [verse 12](#). The cloud of glory is associated with the ascension and the coming of Christ also.

Doom Of The Second Woe -- Great Earthquake (11:13-14)

We have had the blowing of the sixth trumpet, and we are in that interval or lull between the sixth and seventh trumpets. These are woe trumpets, and the second woe is connected with the sixth trumpet -- it is a great earthquake.

And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven [[Rev. 11:13](#)].

And in that hour there came to pass a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell, and 7000 names of men were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were afraid, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

This number of the slain was to be added to those already slain. A fourth of the population of the world was slain at first, and then a third of the population of the world - - totaling over one-half -- and now seven thousand more are killed. It is little wonder that the Lord Jesus said, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ." ([Matt. 24:22](#)).

The earthquake seems to be limited to the city of Jerusalem, just as it was when Christ rose from the dead (see [Matt. 28:2](#)), and also at His crucifixion (see [Matt. 27:51-52](#)).

"Seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake." This is an idiom to indicate that they were men of prominence. They were the ones who had gone along with Antichrist, men whose names got into the headlines when Antichrist came to power.

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly [[Rev. 11:14](#)].

This ends the second woe. The third woe begins shortly, though not immediately. The third woe is not the blowing of the seventh trumpet which will come next, as that leads us beyond the Great Tribulation into the Millennium. The seventh trumpet likewise opens up to us the seven personalities of chapters 12 and 13. The third woe begins when Satan, one of the personalities, is cast down to earth, and we will come to that in chapter 12, [verse 12](#).

Seventh Trumpet -- End Of Great Tribulation And Opening Of Temple In Heaven (11:15-19)

In the middle of all the woes and judgments of the Great Tribulation period, this is inserted for the encouragement of the believers who will be left on the earth, those who were sealed. They are apt to get very much discouraged after several years, although the total length of the Great Tribulation is but seven years and the intensity of it breaks in the last half of that period. The Great Tribulation does not seem long to read about, but I have found seven days in the hospital to be the most trying experience of life. I thought those days would never end; so you do need a little encouragement as you go along.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the

kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth [[Rev. 11:15-18](#)].

And the seventh angel blew the trumpet; and there followed (came to pass) great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world (cosmos) is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign unto the ages of the ages (for ever and ever). And the twenty-four elders, sitting before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thanks to you, O Lord God the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power and didst reign. And the nations were angry (wroth), and thy wrath came, and the time (period) of the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to your servants the prophets and to the saints and to them that fear thy name, the small and great; and to destroy those who destroy (corrupt, the destroyers of) the earth.

The blowing of the seventh trumpet is of utmost significance, and it is of special relevance in the understanding of the remainder of this book. In the program of God, it brings us chronologically to the breathtaking entrance of eternity where the mystery of God is finally unraveled. It brings us in God's program as far as chapter 21 where eternity begins. The broad outline of events which are significant to God is given to us here by the Holy Spirit. This section is a summary, a syllabus, or a capsule synopsis of events up to the door of eternity. The following list will help focus these events in our minds:

1. "Great voices in heaven" follow the blowing of the seventh trumpet. At the opening of the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven. The contrast should be noted, because here the blowing of the seventh trumpet reveals God's program and clears up the mystery of God. All of God's created intelligences can see the end now and are jubilant in anticipation of the termination of evil being so close at hand. It is a time of joy for them.
2. "The kingdom of the world (cosmos) is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign unto the ages of the ages (for ever and ever)." It is not kingdoms (plural) but Kingdom (singular) which denotes the fact that the kingdoms of this world are at present under Satan, to whom there is no distinction of nations, no East or West, no Iron Curtain -- all are his; both sides are included in his domain. A great many people think that Satan is controlling Russia but that the Lord is controlling the United States and angels are hovering over the capitol at Washington, D.C. May I say that those angels may not be God's angels who are hovering over Washington today -- it certainly doesn't look like they are. Actually, all of the kingdoms of this world are

Satan's. It is therefore called the Kingdom -- not kingdoms -- of the world. It is the totality of a civilization and society of which men boast of self-improvement but which becomes more godless and wicked each day. It is a condemned civilization that is moving toward judgment.

It is going to become the Kingdom "of our Lord, and of His Christ." Satan's kingdom is going to be subdued someday, but not by some little saccharine-sweet talk on brotherhood and love. It is going to be delivered to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is going to rule. We are told in Scripture: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" ([Ps. 2:2-3](#)). Rebellion broke out against the Lord and His Christ (Messiah, Anointed) at the arrest of Jesus. The early church understood that this was the condition of the world, for they quoted [Psalm 2](#) when persecution broke out in the early church (see [Acts 4:23-26](#)). We read in [Psalm 2:9](#): "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." In [Revelation 19](#) we are going to see the details of what is given here in this section. The Lord Jesus is coming to put down rebellion. The seventh trumpet is moving along, step by step, toward eternity.

3. "And the twenty-four elders, sitting before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thanks to you, O Lord God the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power and didst reign." This revelation causes the church in heaven to worship and celebrate the coming of Christ to the earth. This will be the answer to our prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" ([Matt. 6:10](#)).

4. "The nations were angry (wroth)" reveals the fact that the stubborn rebellion of man will continue right down to the very end. Right down to the wire, the stubborn heart of man is in rebellion against God. This old nature, this carnal nature that you and I have, is not obedient to God. My friend, you cannot make this old nature obey God. This is exactly what Paul says: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" ([Rom. 8:7](#)). The human family could not bring this old nature under control; that is the reason God is going to get rid of it someday.

5. The nations were angry because "thy wrath came." They had been fed all this putrid pabulum we hear today about the fact that God never intends to punish sin and that man is getting better and better every day -- while, actually, all the time he is getting worse and worse.

6. "And the time (period) of the dead to be judged" brings us to the Great White Throne judgment of the lost dead (see [Rev. 20:11-15](#)).

7. "And to give the reward to your servants the prophets and to the saints and to them that fear thy name, the small and great." The church has already gone into His presence, and the believers there have already been rewarded as indicated by the crowns we have seen on the heads of the elders. This refers now to Old Testament saints and tribulation saints, who are included in the first resurrection, but at a different time. They are now going to be rewarded as the kingdom begins.

8. "And to destroy those who destroy (corrupt, the destroyers of) the earth." We believe that this refers to both man and Satan. Man is a destroyer as well as Satan. Peter warns us of Satan: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" ([1Pet. 5:8](#)).

The next verse brings us to the glad gate of eternity:

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail [[Rev. 11:19](#)].

And the sanctuary (temple) of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His sanctuary (temple), and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

When we see the church again, it will be in the New Jerusalem, and we are told definitely that there is no temple there. Here there is a temple in heaven. The temple which Moses made was made after the pattern in heaven. "And the sanctuary (temple) of God in heaven was opened" means that God is dealing now with Israel.

"Was opened" indicates worship and access to God. All of this points to the nation Israel, for the church has no temple. The measuring of the temple on earth and the opening of the temple in heaven declare the prominence of Israel in this section. The next chapter will substantiate this.

"And the ark of His covenant was seen in His sanctuary (temple)" reminds us that we are dealing with a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. He is going to keep the covenant He has made with Israel, and He will make a New Covenant with them at this time -- that is, the Law will be written in their hearts instead of on cold tablets of stone (see [Jer. 31:31-34](#); [Heb. 8:8-13](#)).

"Lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail" speak of judgment yet to come.

Chapter 12

THEME: Seven performers during the Great Tribulation

The theme of this chapter is the final conflict between Israel and Satan after he is cast out of heaven. Seven performers are introduced to us (see chs. 12 -- 13) by the blowing of this seventh trumpet during the Great Tribulation period. Although the seventh trumpet brings us through the Great Tribulation and the Millennium to the very threshold of eternity, a great deal was omitted. Beginning with chapter 12, this will be compensated for in the presentation of seven prominent personages who play a dominant part in the Great Tribulation period. After that, we will have the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath and then the final destruction of commercial Babylon and religious Babylon.

The prominence of the nation Israel is brought before us. It was suggested in the previous chapter with the measuring of the temple on earth and the opening of the temple in heaven. The last verse of chapter 11 is actually the opening to this chapter.

These seven personages are representatives of persons, both natural and supernatural, physical and spiritual, rulers and nations. The identification and clarification of these are essential for a proper understanding of the Revelation.

The Woman -- Israel (12:1-2)

As we take up the very first one of these personalities, it will illustrate this point. We come now to the crux of the interpretation of the entire Book of Revelation which revolves about this first personality. An outstanding and very intellectual minister years ago made the statement: "If you tell me your interpretation of the woman in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, then I'll tell you your interpretation of prophecy." At the time, I thought he was foolish, but I have come to agree with him. I believe that the identification of this woman is the key to the understanding of the Book of Revelation.

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered [[Rev. 12:1-2](#)].

Let me give you my translation:

And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child, and travailing in birth, and being tormented to be delivered.

The important thing here is: "Who is the woman?" You are acquainted with the interpretation of the Roman church that she represents the virgin mary. There are Protestant interpreters who have been as far wrong as that. Today most of them follow the method of Rome and interpret the woman as the church of all ages. Practically all denominational literature follows this line.

There have been several female founders of cults who could not resist the temptation of seeing themselves pictured in this woman. Joanna Southcott said that she herself was the woman in chapter 12 and that in October, 1814, she would have the man child. She never did, but she had 200,000 followers. We have had in the United States several founders of cults and religions who thought they were this woman. In Southern California, we even had a few female preachers who got the idea they might be the woman, but they weren't. We can dismiss all these claims, unless we want to forsake all intelligent approach to the interpretation of Scripture.

The identifying marks of the woman are the sun, moon, and stars. These belong to Israel as seen in Joseph's dream: "And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast

dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" ([Gen. 37:9-10](#)). Old Jacob interpreted the sun, moon, and stars to mean himself, Rachel, and Joseph's brothers. And they did bow down before Joseph before things were over with (although Rachel had died by that time).

The woman is a sign in heaven, although her career is here in earth. She is not a literal woman; she is a symbol. The career of the woman corresponds to that of Israel, for it is Israel that gave birth to Christ, who is the Child.

At Christmastime we all use [Isaiah 9:6](#) and other verses concerning the birth of Christ. This verse does concern the birth of Christ, but it does not concern us at all; rather, it concerns the nation Israel. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" ([Isa. 9:6](#)). Who is referred to here when Isaiah says, "Unto us"? The church? No; it's the nation Israel. It is quite obvious that Isaiah is speaking to the nation Israel, and he is speaking not relative to a Savior but to a Governor, a Ruler, a King, One who was to come and rule over them. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." It is interesting that as a child He was born in His humanity; but as a Son from eternity, He was given. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder" -- we are not talking now about the Savior but about the One who is coming as King. We will see that happen in the Book of Revelation. "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." There will not be any peace until He comes. When the rulers of this world say, ". . . Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them . . ." ([1Thess. 5:3](#)). They were having a big peace conference in Holland when World War I broke out, and most of the delegates almost got fired upon before they got home! When men say, "Peace and safety," it is idle talk, because man is working at peace from the wrong end. It is the human heart that is wrong, and only Jesus will bring peace. He is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah is talking to Israel when he says, "Unto us a child is born," and that is the figure that John picks up here in Revelation.

The writer to the Hebrews says, "For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda . . ." ([Heb. 7:14](#)). Paul writes in Romans: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" ([Rom. 9:4-5](#)). Paul is talking about Israel. He begins by asking the question: "Who are Israelites?" The answer just happens to be: "And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came." The woman at the well was accurate when she identified the Lord Jesus as a Jew: ". . . How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? . . ." ([John 4:9](#), italics mine). We read in [Micah 5:2-3](#): "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler of Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." Notice that He will be born in Bethlehem, but He comes out of eternity.

"Travailing in birth" is a figure associated with Israel: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" ([Isa. 66:7-8](#)). Israel will go through the Great Tribulation after Christ was born in Bethlehem -- "before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child," meaning Christ.

Therefore, we identify the woman as the nation Israel. No one woman who has ever lived, including the virgin mary, fits into this. It is the nation Israel and certainly not the church of all ages. If we just keep our bearings here and not lose our heads, we know that this is the Great Tribulation period and that the church has already gone to heaven. This woman is not the church of all ages.

"Being tormented." Certainly Israel has suffered satanic anti-Semitism from the time of the birth of Christ to the present, in fact, even since before that day, because Satan knew that Christ would come from this nation.

The Red Dragon -- Satan (12:3-4)

We now have introduced to us another character, and this character is really not a delightful one at all. This is the red dragon. This is not a comic-strip characterization, for there is nothing funny about him. This is very solemn and serious.

And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born [[Rev. 12:3-4](#)].

And there was seen another sign in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and on his head seven diadems (kingly crowns). And his tail draweth the third of the stars of heaven, and he did cast [aorist tense] them into the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might devour her child.

"And there was seen another sign in heaven." Notice that these are signs that are given to us; they are not literal. I told you that if John is giving you a symbol, he will make it clear that it is a symbol.

The red dragon is clearly identified as Satan in [verse 9](#): "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." We can identify this character without speculating at all.

In this second sign, the true character of Satan is revealed with all the wrappings removed:

1. He is called "great" because of his vast power. He controls the nations of the world and offered them to the Lord Jesus if He would worship him (see [Matt. 4:8-9](#)). Worship of himself is Satan's ultimate goal. The kingdoms of this world are his, and he controls them today. In that day it was Rome, but he has controlled every nation.

2. He is called "red" because of the fact that he was a murderer from the beginning (see [John 8:44](#)). He has no regard for human life. I do not understand why so many serve him. Why is it that alcohol finally kills its victims? It is the worst killer there is today. It is because Satan is back of it, my friend, and he has no regard for human life at all.

3. He is called a "dragon" because of the viciousness of his character. He was originally created Lucifer, son of the morning (see [Ezek. 28:12-19](#)), but he is now the epitome of evil and the depth of degradation. He is the most dangerous being in all of God's creation. He is my enemy, and he is your enemy if you are a child of God.

The reason that the Beast in chapter 13 is similar to the dragon is because both the restored Roman Empire and Antichrist are empowered and controlled by Satan. Rome, through the instrumentality of both Herod and Pilate, sought to destroy the child of the woman.

"Seven heads" suggests the perfection of wisdom which characterized the creation of Satan who was originally the "covering cherub." [Ezek 28:12](#) speaks of how he was at his origin: ". . . full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." This reveals two of the fallacies that the world has concerning Satan. This world thinks he is ugly, but may I say to you, he was created "perfect in beauty." If you could see him, you would not see the foul creature that is often pictured for us by the world. Sometimes he is pictured as having horns, cloven feet, and a forked tail. That is the "great god" Pan that the Greeks and Romans worshiped. That is not Satan, although Satan is back of that worship, also. I have seen the ruins of the temple at Pergamum and of other temples to Pan in at least a dozen cities. It is not strange that men are worshiping him; when they will not have God, they certainly will take him. But Satan is smart, he's clever, and he's wise. You and I are no match for him at all. We will be overcome if we try to stand in our own strength against him. He is not only beautiful, he is also full of wisdom. This is the way he is presented in Scripture.

"Ten horns" suggests the final division of the Roman Empire, which is dominated by Satan and which is his final effort to rule the world. The crowns are on the horns, not on the heads, since it is delegated power from Satan. The crowns represent kingly authority and rulership.

"The third of the stars of heaven" indicates the vast extent of the rebellion in heaven when one third of the angelic host followed Satan to their own destruction. Daniel makes reference to this in an admittedly difficult passage (see [Dan. 8:10](#); [Jude 1:6](#)).

The dragon hates the Man Child because it was predicted from the beginning that the child would be the undoing of Satan. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" ([Gen. 3:15](#)).

The Child Of The Woman -- Jesus Christ (12:5-6)

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days [[Rev. 12:5-6](#)].

And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to shepherd (rule) all the nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up unto God and His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of (from) God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and sixty (1260) days.

The "man child" is Christ. He is easily identified here. I hope that you will not fall into the error of equating the Child with the church, although many have done that.

"Who is to shepherd (rule) all the nations with a rod of iron" is a clear-cut reference to Christ. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" ([Ps. 2:9](#)). In [Acts 4](#) the persecuted Christians quoted [Psalm 2](#), identifying the One to rule with a rod of iron as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ will come to put down all enmity, all opposition, all rebellion on the earth. How will He do it? He will break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. If this peace crowd would only come up with a plan that would not work, it would not be necessary to put down rebellion with a bit of violence. But there is no other way to put it down. How do you think Jesus Christ is going to come to power in a rebellious world? Suppose He was suddenly to appear at the capital of any nation in the world. Do you think they are prepared to surrender to Him and turn all authority over to Him? This includes my own country. Is the United States prepared to yield to Jesus Christ? If you say "Yes," I will have to ask "Why don't they?" They could yield to Him today. My friend, the world is in rebellion against Him. Maybe you are one of the peace crowd. You don't like the shedding of blood, you just hate violence and war -- don't we all? -- but this is the only way that rebellion can be put down. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule.

"And her child was caught up unto God and His throne." This is a reference to the ascension of Christ. In the Gospels the emphasis is on the death of Christ. In the Epistles the emphasis is upon the resurrection of Christ. In the Book of Revelation the emphasis is upon the ascension of Christ. Protestantism, and even fundamentalism, has ignored the ascension of Christ, and this is one reason we have not had a great enough emphasis upon the present ministry of Christ. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" ([Acts 1:9-11](#)).

The Book of Revelation is the unveiling of the ascended Christ, the glorified Christ, the Christ who is coming in glory. The Book of the Revelation rests upon the fact of the Ascension. He is the One who has been opening the seals which have brought to pass

everything that has happened since then. We are told in [Hebrews 12:2](#): "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." A great many have the impression that this means He is twiddling His thumbs, but that is because they do not know Revelation. He is not sitting up there doing nothing. He is going to do a great deal because of His ascension into heaven, and He has a present ministry today with the church.

"And she was delivered of a son, a man child." I believe this settles the identity of the woman. Israel is clearly the one from whom Christ came. While the church came from Jesus Christ, He, according to the flesh, came from Israel. Again let me quote Paul: "Who are Israelites. . . . of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came . . ." ([Rom. 9:4-5](#)). We are told in [Galatians 4:4-5](#): "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "Made under the law" -- what law? It is the Mosaic Law which was given to Israel. He came "made [or, born] under the law" because He was an Israelite. Again in Galatians we read: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" ([Gal. 3:16](#)). Before the nation came into existence, God said to Abraham, "I am going to make you a great nation, and through that nation I am sending a seed" -- not many, but one, and that One is Christ. We have already looked at [Isaiah 9:6](#) which says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. . . ." "Us" does not mean the United States, although some seem to think so! "Unto us" means Israel. Isaiah was an Israelite and was speaking to that nation. He was not speaking either to the church or to the Gentiles, but to Israel.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of (from) God." During the intense part of the Great Tribulation period, this remnant of Israel will be protected by God. There are those who dogmatically say that Israel will go to the rock-hewn city of Petra and will be preserved there because no enemy can get in. But in our day an enemy now comes from above and drops down bombs. The last place I would want to be when bombs start falling is within that rock-hewn city of Petra. To make that dogmatic statement alongside clear-cut prophecies is certainly to deceive people. This is not a clear-cut prophecy, and I do not know where the place will be. It does not hurt us preachers to say we don't know something when we don't know. To my judgment it is tragic to be so dogmatic about that which is not revealed. If you want to make such a statement about a speculative Scripture, I will not object if you will say, "This is my judgment," or "I think this is the way it will be."

Michael, The Archangel, Wars With The Dragon (12:7-12)

[And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,](#)

[And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.](#)

[And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out](#)

into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him [[Rev. 12:7-9](#)].

And there arose war in heaven, Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, the one called (the) Devil, and the Satan, he that deceiveth the whole (inhabited) world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels with him were cast down.

We have here a startling revelation: "And there arose war in heaven." The United Nations could not do anything about this war any more than they could about any other war that has taken place since they came into existence. It is difficult to imagine that there is war in heaven, but Satan still has access to heaven and, as long as he does, there will be this problem.

We are told in the Book of Job that Satan came with the sons of God to appear before God (see [Job 1-2](#)). He apparently had as much right there as they did. He had been created the highest creation. We also read in [Zechariah 3:1-2](#): "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, the LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Satan has access to God, and he is able to carry on a communication with God. [Luke 22:31](#) tells us: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." I do not think that Satan sent a Western Union telegram to God or that he telephoned Him. He was able to come into the presence of God, and he requested that he might test this man Simon Peter -- and he was granted that permission.

"Michael" is the archangel. We are told this in the Book of Jude: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" ([Jude 1:9](#)). Evidently there are other archangels, but Michael has a peculiar ministry with the nation Israel. [Daniel 10:13](#) tells us: "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." Michael is "one of the chief princes." Although there are probably other archangels, Michael and Gabriel are the only ones whose names are given in Scripture. Again in Daniel we read: "But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince" ([Dan. 10:21](#)).

"Michael your prince" -- since the Lord is talking to Daniel, this refers to Daniel's people, the nation Israel. This is made clear in [Daniel 12:1](#): "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." At that time, we are told, there will be a time of trouble, the Great Tribulation. Michael will again step out and drive Satan out of heaven, because he happens to be the prince who watches over the nation Israel. This is a tremendous thing, and it beggars description.

There will be a fierce struggle, a war. Satan is not going to retire easily, but Michael and his angels will prevail, and Satan and his angels will be thrown out of heaven. The Lord Jesus referred to this in [Luke 10:18](#), "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

There is no mistaking this creature who is called the great dragon, for he is marked out with great detail. His fingerprints are put down here in the Revelation. Because God knew that a great percentage of the preachers of this century would teach that Satan does not exist, He makes it so you cannot miss him. If your enemy can get you to think he does not exist, he will have a tremendous advantage over you, and he will be able to get a crack at you that will sweep you off your feet. Satan moved in afresh and anew during my generation simply because my generation did not believe in him. Now we are getting an overdose of him, and he has been made a weird and wild thing. But, actually, he is not an ugly creature, by any means; he is an angel of light.

Notice how he is identified here:

1. He is called "the old serpent." This takes us back to the Garden of Eden. Our Lord said, "... He was a murderer from the beginning . . ." ([John 8:44](#)). The words old and beginning are akin, according to Vincent. Satan is that old serpent, the one who was at the beginning in the Garden of Eden.

2. He is called "Devil," a name which comes from the Greek diabolos, meaning "slanderer or accuser." He is so labeled in [verse 10](#): "the accuser of our brethren." This is the reason believers need an Advocate with the Father. You and I have an enemy today who is not only causing us problems down here, but you would be surprised what he says about you and me in heaven! There is nothing that you do or say or think which he does not turn in against you up yonder. But God already knows about it, and I like to beat Satan to the draw and confess it before he gets up there to bring the accusation against me. The Lord Jesus is our Advocate. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" ([1John 2:1](#)).

It would be wonderful if I did not sin, but I do. Thank God that we have an Advocate with the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous is up there to defend us. He has been kept busy ever since I have been in this world, and I have a notion He's been pretty busy defending you, too. Don't think He is up there sitting idly by. He is our Defender, our Advocate. The Devil is a slanderer; he is a liar from the beginning. He is the origin of all lies today. Where does the gossip that goes on in some of our churches originate? It originates in the pit of hell, my friend. That is the last place from which anything ought to be shipped into the church!

3. He is also called "Satan," which means "adversary." He is the awful adversary of God and of every one of God's children. We are told: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" ([1Pet. 5:8](#)). I have received a great many letters from people who have been delivered out of cults and "isms" through the study of the Word of God. One man wrote: "I was in a cult. I wrote you the letter I did [and it was a mean one!] to try to trap you, to try to trick

you. I thought I was right and you were wrong. When I began to study the Word of God, I came to realize how Satan had trapped me." Satan has a lot of folk trapped today, even church members. We need to recognize that he is our enemy. That does not mean we should go overboard and just dwell on Satan and demons. It certainly is true that there is a new and fresh manifestation of him today that was not here a generation ago. But keep your eye on Jesus Christ, for He is your place of deliverance, and He is up yonder to help you.

4. Finally, he is called "he that deceiveth the whole (inhabited) world." During the Great Tribulation, Satan will be able to totally deceive men -- today he deceives only partially. Satan deceives men relative to God and the Word of God. He caused Eve to distrust God: "Has God said you should not eat of that tree? You just can't trust Him, can you?" (see [Gen. 3:1-4](#)). Satan deceives man relative to man. Satan makes out mankind better than he is, yet he despises us. He builds us up and tells us we could become gods -- how wonderful that would be (see [Gen. 3:5](#)). Satan deceives man relative to the world, the flesh, and the Devil. You and I think we are big enough to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil, but we are not big enough to overcome any one of them. The world is too big for us, and it will certainly draw us away from the Lord. Satan deceives man relative to the gospel. He does not mind a man going to church or even joining a dozen churches, but he does not want that man to be saved. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" ([2Cor. 4:4](#)).

Someone has said, "Satan is to be dreaded as a lion; more to be dreaded as a serpent; and most to be dreaded as an angel." That is where he traps the multitude today.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation,
and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his
Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused
them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word
of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to
the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come
down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he
hath but a short time [[Rev. 12:10-12](#)].

And I heard a great voice in heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power,
and the kingdom of our God, and the authority [Gr.: exousia] of His Christ; for the
accuser of our brethren is cast down, the one accusing them before our God day and
night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the
word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even until death. Therefore, rejoice,
O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea; because the devil
is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.

"And I heard." This reminds us that John is still the spectator and auditor of these events. He does not want us to forget that, because it is very important.

When Satan has been cast out of heaven, it will cause great rejoicing among the redeemed who are in heaven. "A great voice in heaven" seems to refer to the Old Testament saints or to the tribulation saints who have been martyred up to this point (see [Rev. 6:9-10](#)), for they mention their brethren on the earth: "for the accuser of our brethren is cast down."

The first great demonstration of power to be exerted against evil after the death and resurrection of Christ is the casting out of Satan from heaven. That is the beginning of the movement that will lead to the Lord Jesus taking over the reins of government down here. When Christ died on the cross, He paved the way for Satan's being cast out of heaven. Listen to the language in Colossians: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" ([Col. 2:14](#)). The Lord Jesus made it possible for man to be saved by His death. God canceled our debt of sin by nailing it to the Cross of Christ. Christ made full payment. Paul goes on to say: "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" ([Col. 2:15](#)). I personally believe that this began when He ascended into heaven and took that great company of saints with Him. He led captivity captive and took them into the presence of God. Those were the Old Testament saints, and I think they are in this group who are now saying that salvation is come.

This opens the way for the coming of four great, blood-bought, heavenly freedoms. We talk about four freedoms down here which have not yet come to pass, but here are four freedoms that are going to come to pass when Christ comes.

1. "The salvation" -- its consummation is in the person of Christ. Our salvation will not be consummated until we are in His presence: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)). This will be true when He comes to the earth. I believe this verse speaks of His visible return to the earth.

2. "The power." The way nations have handled power has been tragic. This has been true of every great nation. Some nations have been able to make war and, like a great prairie fire, they have spread across another nation, destroying cities and killing people. The nations have abused power, but it will be wonderful when Christ takes the power and controls this earth.

3. "And the kingdom of our God" is going to be established on the earth. Not until then will there be peace and righteousness and freedom on this earth. In this land of the free and home of the brave, there are not many brave left, and I don't know that there are many free who are left either. It will be wonderful when His Kingdom comes on this earth. This very statement reveals that the Kingdom was not established at the first coming of Christ.

4. "And the authority (Gr.: exousia) of His Christ" shows that Christ has not yet taken over the governmental authority of this world. He is not building a kingdom; He is not establishing His Kingdom today. Wait until He starts moving. All of these judgments are in preparation for His return to this earth, giving men a warning and an opportunity to turn to Him -- and multitudes will do so. There is always a note of grace in the judgment of God.

"The one accusing them before our God day and night" reveals that this is part of the present strategy of Satan which attempts to thwart Christ's purpose with His church today and with the Tribulation saints tomorrow. This necessitates Christ's present ministry as Advocate for us.

Victory for the accused saints comes through three avenues which are mentioned to us in this section:

1. "The blood of the Lamb." There is wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb. Don't you forget that. Let us not minimize that. The many references to the blood of the Lamb necessitate its being on display in heaven. This is not a crude conception; rather, the crudity is in our sins which made it necessary for Him to shed His blood. If you and I get any victory, it will be because He shed His blood for us. We will never, never be able to lead "the victorious life." The most defeated people I have ever met have been people who are supposedly living "the victorious life." All of them look anemic to me. They look to me like they are fugitives from a blood bank. They are shallow and shallow looking, and they need a blood transfusion. They don't live a victorious life -- Christ does! If any of us overcome, it will be through the blood of the Lamb.

2. "The word of their testimony" reveals that they were true martyrs. Those who are Christ's cannot deny Him. "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" ([Matt. 10:33](#)). There is something that is strengthening in giving a testimony. Don't misunderstand me -- some of the testimonies given today are pretty shallow. Some of them are given by those who ought not to be giving a testimony, because the people close to them know their shoddy living, and it makes them rather cynical and skeptical. The place to give a testimony is not at a nice, well-fed church banquet where all the saints say amen to everything you say. If you have a life to back it up, the place to give your testimony is out yonder in the world, when you are up against that godless, blaspheming crowd. Let them know that you belong to Christ and that you are in Christ. There is something strengthening in that. There is something that makes a man stand tall when he can give a testimony like that. I know of a man in business who is a big, double-fisted fellow. He is an executive in a very hard-hitting concern, and there are a lot of blaspheming folk around him. When he hears someone blaspheming, in a very quiet manner, he will say to that person, "I'd like to tell you what Jesus Christ means to me." The Lord Jesus says, "If you deny Me before men, I'll deny you before My Father in heaven" (see [Matt. 10:33](#)). These are the true martyrs. The Greek word *martus* means "witness." These are the ones who witness for Him.

3. "They loved not their life even unto death." This is an exalted plane to come to, where you and I make the Lord Jesus the first love in our life and put love of self down in second, third, fourth, or some other place. Surely we ought to have respect for ourselves, and there ought to be a dignity about us, but let's put Him first. When we put Him first, we will not have any problem living for Him down here. The great problem today is not the set of rules you may be living by; it is what is behind the rules. Here is what you need behind them: the blood of the Lamb, the word of your testimony, and love for Him above everything else. Love is the very basis of service. The Lord said to Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" When Simon Peter finally could say that he did, although on a weak plane, the

Lord Jesus said, "I am going to use you. You are going to feed My sheep" (see [John 21:15-17](#)). Peter preached the first sermon in the church and probably saw more people saved per capita of those then living than any other time in the history of the world.

There are two radical reactions to the casting out of Satan from heaven. There is rejoicing in heaven, for this awesome, treacherous, dangerous, and deadly serpent is out forever. Then there is woe on the earth. This is the third woe that extends through the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath. The only consolation for the earth is that Satan's sojourn on earth is brief -- forty two months. There is an intensification of tribulation during this period.

The Dragon Persecutes The Woman (12:13-16)

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent [[Rev. 12:13-14](#)].

This is the last wave of anti-Semitism that will roll over the world, and it is the worst, because Satan is cast down to the earth and knows that his time is short. He hates Israel because Christ came from this nation according to the flesh. This is the Time of Jacob's Trouble, and this is the reason I cannot rejoice in the present return of Israel to that land. Some people seem to think they are going back for the Millennium. They are not -- they are going back for the Great Tribulation period if they are going back for any purpose at all, according to the Word of God.

"Two wings of a great eagle" are given to her that she might fly into the wilderness. There are those who see in this the airplane that will take Israel to their hiding place, and they always pick the rock-hewn city of Petra as being that place. I do not know how an airplane would land in that place, but that is the problem of those who give that explanation.

"Two wings of a great eagle" is not something that is unusual or peculiar to the people of Israel, but it is reminiscent of the grace of God in His past deliverance of Israel from Egypt. He said to them: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" ([Exod. 19:4](#)). They had not come out of Egypt by their own effort or their own ability. They came out because God brought them out, and eagles' wings became a symbol to them. Here again in the Great Tribulation, the Israelites cannot deliver themselves, and no one is interested in delivering them. But God will get them out on eagles' wings by His grace.

"Into the wilderness, into her place." Scripture does not say that the rock-hewn city of Petra will be that place. It could be, but we just simply do not know. This "wilderness" has been variously identified -- Petra is not the only place. Some say that it is the wilderness of the peoples of the world; that is, that there will be another worldwide scattering of Israel. Since Christ said, ". . . flee into the mountains" ([Matt. 24:16](#)), we believe it to be a literal wilderness, possibly that same one in which Israel spent forty

years under Moses. This time it will be forty-two months, for that is the meaning of "a time, and times, and half a time." The important thing is not the place but the fact that God will protect them by His grace.

"Where she is nourished" reminds us that in the past God sustained them with manna from heaven and water from the rock. He will nourish them again in possibly the same way.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth [[Rev. 12:15-16](#)].

And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

In view of the fact that the wilderness is literal, the water also could be literal. God had delivered Israel out of the water, both at the beginning of the wilderness march at the Red Sea and then again at the end of the wilderness march at the Jordan River. However, the floods of water could be armies flowing like a river upon them. This figure of speech has been used by Isaiah (see [Isa. 8:7-8](#)).

In Ezekiel's picture of the last days, the king of the north is seen marching on Israel. Satan will use every means to destroy the people. How will he be stopped? No nation is there to stop him. But God is there, and He will destroy him with natural forces when he invades Palestine: "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" ([Ezek. 38:22](#)). This gives us an indication of what John is talking about here in Revelation.

The Remnant Of Israel (12:17)

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [[Rev. 12:17](#)].

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and he went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

"The rest of her seed" may refer to the remnant who is God's witness in this period -- the 144,000 who have been sealed. They are evidently witnessing throughout the world. These "keep the commandments of God," which places them back under the Law. This precludes the possibility of the witnesses being the church.

All anti-Semitism is Satan inspired and will finally culminate in Satan's making a supreme effort to destroy the nation of Israel. From the brickyards of Pharaoh's Egypt, Haman's gallows, Herod's cruel edict, through Hitler's purge, and to the world of the

Great Tribulation, Satan has led the attack against these people because of the man child -
- Jesus Christ.

Chapter 13

THEME: Wild beast out of the sea and earth

Seven personages are introduced to us by the seventh trumpet, five of whom we met in [Rev 12](#); the woman, or Israel; the red dragon, Satan; the child of the woman, Christ; Michael, the archangel; and the remnant of Israel, that is, the 144,000 who were sealed of God and who are going to make it through the Great Tribulation. In chapter 13 the final two personages are brought before us. One is the wild beast out of the sea; he is both a political power and a person. The other is the wild beast out of the earth; he is a religious leader. Here is where the action is when we come to these personages. Here is revealed to us the great warfare that is going on between light and darkness, between God and Satan. It is manifested now as we draw to the end of the age during the Great Tribulation period.

These two beasts are presented to us as wild beasts -- that is the literal translation. It is bad enough to be a beast, but to be a wild beast compounds the injury. There is much disagreement among reputable Bible expositors as to the identity of the beasts. Some consider the first beast to be a person, while others treat him as the last form of the Roman Empire. Some treat the second beast as the Man of Sin, while others consider him merely as the prophet, or the John-the-Baptist type, for the first beast. These difficulties arise because it is impossible to separate a king from his kingdom. A dictator must have a realm over which he rules, or he is no dictator. Though it is difficult to distinguish the two, it seems that the first beast is the antichrist, the ruler over the restored Roman Empire. In [Revelation 16:10](#) it speaks of "the throne of the wild beast." I would judge from this that there is somebody to sit on that throne, and that is the beast who is presented here -- but he would not be the beast if he did not have the empire. After determining the identity of the first beast, it is not really difficult to identify the second. He is a man, the false prophet, the religious leader, who leads in the worship of the first beast -- and he is antichrist also.

There is another view being held today that antichrist is the denial of the person of Christ rather than an actual person. In other words, antichrist is false doctrine rather than a person yet to be revealed. The explanation, I believe, is found in the meaning of the preposition anti, which has two usages. The first meaning of anti is "over against." Its second meaning is "instead of" or "in place of." It has both meanings in Scripture. In both his first and second epistles, John mentions the antichrist. He is the only one who uses that designation. We can see both of these characteristics in antichrist; he is the one who is against Christ and the one who imitates Christ -- antichrist is both.

In his first epistle John writes: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" ([1John 2:18](#)). "Little children, it is the last time." John said that nineteen hundred years ago. We have been in the last time a long time! Note here that John not only says there is going to be an antichrist, but that already in his day there were many antichrists. What was the thing which identified an antichrist? "Who is a liar but he that

denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" ([1John 2:22](#)). Antichrist denies the deity of Christ. He is against Christ. He is the enemy of Christ on the earth.

In the fourth chapter of his first epistle, John tells us some additional facts concerning antichrist. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. . . . And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" ([1John 4:1, 3](#)). In other words, any person or any group or any book that denies the deity of Christ is antichrist. I consider the rock opera, Jesus Christ Superstar, to be antichrist. It is against the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Also, any minister who denies the deity of Christ is antichrist -- he is against Christ.

In John's second epistle we read: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" ([2John 1:7](#)). Antichrist is a deceiver -- he pretends to be Christ, and he is not. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "There are going to be many who will come in My name, saying, 'I am Christ.' You are to test them because not every spirit is of God." We need to test the spirits today. My friend, you need to start by testing your little group or the cult in which you are interested. Instead of being super-duper saints, they may actually be following an antichrist. Our Lord warned of such in the Olivet Discourse: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" ([Matt. 24:24](#)). There will arise false Christs who will be able to perform miracles; this second beast is really a miracle worker -- he is an antichrist.

Therefore, the first beast is political antichrist, and the second beast is religious antichrist. Even the Devil cannot put it all together in one person. I believe there are two persons, these two beasts, who are antichrist.

Wild Beast Out Of The Sea -- Description, A Political Power And A Person (13:1-2)

The first verse of this chapter introduces the beast from the sea.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy [[Rev. 13:1](#)].

Let me give you my translation:

And he stood on the sand of the sea; and I saw a (wild) beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his hands names of blasphemy.

My translation reads, "And he stood on the sand of the sea," but the Authorized Version reads, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea," as if it were John. The better manuscripts

today show the subject of the sentence to be he. Who is he? Whom were we last talking about in the previous chapter? He is the same person, and that, of course, is Satan.

"And I saw a (wild) beast coming up out of the sea." Who brings him out of the sea? Satan brings him out of the sea. In Scripture the sea is a picture of the nations of the world, of mankind, like the restless sea.

"Having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy." This beast really boggles the mind. If I were to meet him in the dark, I know for sure that he and I would be going in the same direction, only I would be lots farther down the road than he would be!

The dragon (Satan) stands on the sands of the sea, and it is he who brings the wild beast out of the sea and dominates him. This is Satan's masterpiece. The first beast is a person who heads up the old Roman Empire. Rome simply fell apart, and this is the only one who will ever be able to put it together again.

God is apparently taking His hands off this earth for awhile and turning it over to Satan. I believe this is poetic justice. God must let Satan demonstrate that, when he is given full sway, he will not be able to produce. Otherwise, Satan would always be able to say to God from the lake of fire, "You never gave me a chance. If You would have taken Your hands off and let me alone, I would have been able to accomplish my purpose and establish a second kingdom." But God is going to let Satan have his way so that he will not be able to say that.

An understanding of the prophecy of Daniel is very important to the understanding of the Revelation. This wild beast is similar in description to the fourth beast, that nondescript beast, in the seventh chapter of Daniel. There it represents the prophetic history of the Roman Empire, down to "the little horn" and his destruction. That fourth beast looked like it became dormant for a little while, and then out of one of its seven heads there came up ten horns, out of which came a little horn. The little horn put together three of the horns and was able to take the other seven.

At the time of the writing of John, much of the prophecy of Daniel had been fulfilled. The first three beasts -- Babylon, the lion; Media-Persia, the bear; and Graeco-Macedonia, the panther -- had all been fulfilled. When Daniel gave it, it was prophecy, but it was fulfilled by John's time. Therefore, John centers on the fourth beast and upon the little horn because the fourth beast, the Roman Empire, had appeared. John was living in the time of the Roman Empire, having been exiled to the Isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor, Domitian. Already, signs of weakness and decay were visible in the empire, and John was spectator to that which was still future in Daniel's day. However, in the Book of Revelation the emphasis is upon the rule of the little horn of [Daniel 7](#), and the little horn is set before us as a wild beast, for he is now ruling and controlling the restored Roman Empire in John's prophecy. The little horn of [Daniel 7](#) and the wild beast of [Revelation 13](#) are identical. You can see that an understanding of [Daniel 7](#) would be basic to understanding this passage.

The wild Beast is the Man of Sin and Antichrist, the final world dictator. The last verse of this chapter confirms this view. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count

the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six" ([v. 18](#)). We are dealing with the man who is the world dictator at the end.

There has been a great deal of excitement in our day (and I am included in the group that is excited) about the current existence of the Common Market in Europe. Throughout history, there have been many who have attempted to put Europe back together again. Charlemagne attempted it and failed. I think that the Roman Catholic church attempted it in the Holy Roman Empire and certainly did not succeed. The Holy Roman Empire was centered in Vienna, Austria, which makes it a very interesting place to visit today. Franz Josef was the last of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire who tried to put Europe together, but he was the worst flop of all. His son apparently either was murdered or committed suicide, and that ended the Holy Roman Empire. Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, and Mussolini all attempted it. But God has not been ready yet, and He will not let that one appear until the time of the Great Tribulation. To me the Common Market is interesting, not because we are seeing prophecy fulfilled, but because we are seeing the stage set which reveals that prophecy can be fulfilled. Down through the centuries, many have said that it is impossible to get Europe together. It is impossible until God is ready -- and Satan is going to supply the man. The Common Market is just an interesting instrument -- that's all.

The ten horns with ten diadems speak of the tenfold division of the Roman Empire in the time of the Great Tribulation. The horns are the ten kings who rule over this tenfold division. This interpretation is confirmed by [Revelation 17:12](#).

The little horn comes to power by first putting down three of these rulers, and afterward he dominates the other seven and thus becomes the world dictator.

The seven heads are not so easily identified. They are interpreted in [Revelation 17:9-10](#) as seven kings. These do not reign contemporaneously as the ten horns do, but they appear in chronological order. Some have interpreted them as representing certain Roman emperors, such as Domitian who was then ruling. Others interpret these seven heads as the forms of government through which the Roman Empire passed. They had kings, councils, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, and emperors. The third view is that the seven heads could represent seven great nations of antiquity which blasphemed God: Rome, Greece, media-Persia, Chaldea, Egypt, and Assyria. The kingdom of the beast which is yet to come would be the seventh. Another likely view is that the seven heads correspond to the seven heads of the dragon which denote exceptional wisdom. Satan energizes the Man of Sin, the last dictator. I cannot be dogmatic about any one of these views and do not feel that it is crucial to do so.

All seven heads are guilty of blasphemy. Blasphemy manifests itself in two ways according to Govett: (1) making oneself equal with God, that is, usurping His place, and (2) slandering and taking God's name in vain. The emperors of Rome were guilty of the first form. They made themselves equal with God; there was emperor worship in the Roman Empire. The Pharisees were guilty of the latter when they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. The beast here is guilty of both forms.

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority [[Rev. 13:2](#)].

And the wild beast which I saw was like unto a panther, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

This is really a weird-looking creature! He has never been seen on land or sea or in the air. Without doubt, this is a real spectacle.

John notes that he is a composite beast. We can begin now to formulate some very definite facts concerning Antichrist. He combines the characteristics of the other beasts representing kingdoms which Daniel saw in his vision of [Daniel 7](#). Consulting that passage and my commentary on the Book of Daniel might be helpful to you at this point.

(a) "And the wild beast which I saw was like unto a panther." The outward appearance of the Beast was like a panther: "After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it" ([Dan. 7:6](#)). Panther and leopard are the same Greek word; I prefer the word panther. This was the Graeco-Macedonian Empire. Greece was noted for its brilliance and its advancement in the arts and sciences. It was noted for its philosophy, its architecture, and its marvelous literature. The Greek language itself is a wonderful language. The empire of the Beast will have all the outward culture which was the glory of Greece.

(b) "And his feet were as the feet of a bear" reminds us of the second beast of Daniel: "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh" ([Dan. 7:5](#)). This was Media-Persia, noted for its pagan splendor as it paddled and waddled over the earth like a Gargantua. The empire of the Beast will have all the pagan splendor and wealth that Media-Persia had.

(c) "And his mouth as the mouth of a lion" reminds us of the first beast of Daniel: "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it" ([Dan. 7:4](#)). This was Babylonian autocracy. When Nebuchadnezzar ordered the death of his wise men and then later on the fiery furnace for the three Hebrew children, there was none to question his authority. He was the head of gold; he was an autocrat. Though the Man of Sin will be one of the toes of the image that Daniel saw, composed partly of clay and partly of iron, he will rule with the autocracy and dictatorial authority of Nebuchadnezzar.

This final world dictator comes to his zenith under the domination of Satan. The source of his power is found in Satan who raises him up, empowers and energizes him for the dastardly dictatorial job he will do. He is the closest to an incarnation of Satan that appears in Scripture. Luke said that Satan had entered into Judas Iscariot (see [Luke 22:3](#)). Christ used similar language when He spoke to Simon Peter in [Matthew 16:23](#). Is the Man of Sin the incarnation of Satan? I think we can say that he is. Certainly Satan has

entered into him. Paul wrote: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" ([2Thess. 2:9-10](#)).

Wild Beast, Death-dealing Stroke (13:3)

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast [[Rev. 13:3](#)].

And I saw one of his heads as though it had been slain unto death; and his stroke of death was healed; and the whole (inhabited) earth wondered after the beast.

This verse, together with chapter 17, [verse 8](#), has led many to the view that Satan actually raises the Beast from the dead. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" ([Rev. 17:8](#)).

Because of these two Scriptures, there are many who have taken the position that the Beast is actually raised from the dead by Satan. This cannot be because Satan does not have power to raise the dead; that power has not been given to him at all. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who can raise the dead. The Gospel of John records these words spoken by our Lord: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" ([John 5:21, 25, 28-29](#)). Only the Lord Jesus can raise the dead -- Satan cannot. Therefore, I take it that the restoration is a false, a fake resurrection.

Those who take the view that Satan raises the Beast from the dead interpret the Beast as a man only. That the early church, for the most part, held to this view is indisputable. They disagreed as to the identity of the Beast. Some thought he was Judas Iscariot. Others identified him as Nero. Even Augustine, in his day, wrote:

What means the declaration, that the mystery of iniquity doth already work? Some suppose it to be spoken of the Roman Emperor, and therefore Paul did not speak in plain words, although he always expected that what he said would be understood as applying to Nero, whose doings already appeared like those of Antichrist. Hence it was that some suspected that he would rise from the dead as Antichrist (J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, Lectures on the Book of Revelation, p. 398, footnote).

There are others who take the view that the Beast here refers to the Roman Empire and that the imperial form of government, under which Rome fell, will be restored in a startling manner. I believe this will happen, but I do not think it is a resurrection, for Rome never died; Rome fell apart. Rome is like Humpty-Dumpty:

Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall;

Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall;
All the King's horses, and all the King's men
Could not put Humpty-Dumpty together again.

But Antichrist can and will put Humpty-Dumpty together again, and it will be a marvelous thing. The Roman Empire has not truly died; it lives on in the nations of Europe today.

I think that both of these views do have something to commend them, while both views have serious objections. There can be no real resurrection of an evil man before the Great White Throne judgment. And, at that time, only Christ can raise the dead. Christ will raise the dead who stand before the Great White Throne (see [Rev. 20:11-15](#)). We have already considered [John 5:28-29](#): "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Only Christ can rise the dead -- both saved and lost. Satan has no power to raise the dead. He is not a life-giver. He is a devil, a destroyer, a death-dealer.

The Roman Empire is to be revitalized and made to cohere in a miraculous manner under the world dictator, the beast, yet [verse 3](#) seems to demand a more adequate explanation than this.

I believe the beast is a man who will exhibit a counterfeit and imitation resurrection. This will be the great delusion, the big lie of the Great Tribulation period. We are told that God will give them over to believe the big lie (see [2Thess. 2:11](#)), and this is part of the big lie. They will not accept the resurrection of Christ, but they sure are going to fake the resurrection of Antichrist.

"And his stroke of death was healed" shows the blasphemous imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ. The challenge in that day will be: "What has Christ done that Antichrist has not done?" Nobody can duplicate the resurrection of Christ; they might imitate it, but they cannot duplicate it. Yet Antichrist is going to imitate it in a way that will fool the world -- it is the big lie. Believers say, "Christ is risen!" The boast of unbelievers in that day will be: "So is Antichrist!" The Roman Empire will spring back into existence under the cruel hand of a man who faked a resurrection, and a gullible world who rejected Christ will finally be taken in by this forgery.

We begin now to get a composite picture of the Antichrist. The rider on the white horse (see [Rev. 6](#)) brought a false peace to the world. In the recorded history of man, he has engaged in fifteen hundred wars and has signed some eight thousand peace treaties. Yet in his entire history, he has enjoyed only between two and three hundred years of true peace. Certainly G. K. Chesterton was accurate when he said, "One of the paradoxes of this age is that this is the age of Pacifism, but not the age of Peace." The Antichrist comes in on a false platform of bringing peace to the world. How many times in the United States have we elected a president on the platform that he would bring peace, only to find that he took us right into a war? We have been a warlike nation. We are not very peaceful.

Arnold Toynbee, an English historian, said this in 1953:

By forcing on mankind more and more lethal weapons, and at the same time making the world more and more interdependent economically, technology has brought mankind to such a degree of distress that we are ripe for deifying any new caesar who might succeed in bringing the world unity and peace.

That is all Antichrist will need to offer the world when he comes. He will say, "I am going to give you peace," and the people will say "Hallelujah!" and put him into office. That is the way we do it in the United States where we are supposed to be a very cultured, educated, sophisticated, and civilized nation. The world will put Antichrist into power.

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen made this remarkable statement:

The Antichrist will come disguised as the great humanitarian. He will talk peace, prosperity, and plenty, not as a means to lead us to God, but as ends in themselves. He will explain guilt away psychologically, make men shrink in shame if their fellowmen say they are not broad-minded and liberal. He will spread the lie that men will never be better until they make society better.

This is one statement made by Bishop Sheen which I'll agree with one hundred percent.

Wild Beast, Deity Assumed (13:4-5)

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? [[Rev. 13:4](#)].

And they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him?

This is the supreme moment for Satan. He wants to be worshiped, and the whole world is going to worship him during this period. My friend, if the Spirit of God took His hand off this world today and off you and me, I am afraid that many of us would be in the position of backsliders; and if Antichrist appeared, we would follow him like a little faithful dog follows his master.

"And they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast?" What a parody on the worship of the true God. They say, "Look, we are worshiping something more wonderful than the God of the Bible!"

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months [[Rev. 13:5](#)].

And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue (to work) forty and two months.

The only good news here is that Antichrist will be reigning like this for only forty-two months, or three and one-half years.

"A mouth speaking great things" means he is a big-mouthed fellow. Daniel also mentions this concerning him. He is really going to be a big talker; he will promise anything. This

is one reason you ought to be careful listening to anyone on radio or television today, including this poor preacher or any politician or educator or newsman. We need to test everything that we hear. Antichrist is going to have charisma. He is going to be able to talk himself into the good graces of this Christ-rejecting world.

Wild Beast, Defying God (13:6-8)

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven [[Rev. 13:6](#)].

And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and those which dwell (tabernacle) in heaven.

This is the dreadful limit to which the Beast goes in blasphemy. He is against Christ and His church which are in heaven. Thank God that the church is no longer on the earth! I do not see how anyone who studies Revelation can believe that the church is going to go through this period of the Great Tribulation.

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world [[Rev. 13:7-8](#)].

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints." The saints (there will be saints during the Tribulation period, although they are not, of course, the church) will be overcome by the brutal Beast. In the will of God many believers, both Jew and Gentile, will suffer martyrdom.

"And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain." Spurgeon used to say something like this: "I am glad that my name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life before I got here, because if God had waited until I got here, He never would have chosen me." That is true of all the saints, both in the church age and in the Great Tribulation period.

This will be the darkest hour in the history of the world; and the church, thank God, will not be here. I am thankful I am not going through the Great Tribulation period. I will not be under Antichrist; I am under Christ. I am not looking for Antichrist; I am looking for Christ to come.

Wild Beast, Defiance Denied To Anyone (13:9-14)

If any man have an ear, let him hear.

He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints [[Rev. 13:9-10](#)].

If any man hath an ear, let him hear. If any one is for captivity (bring together captives) into captivity he goeth (away): if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

This is without doubt one of the most awe-inspiring statements in the Word of God. "If any man" is a thrice-repeated invitation to the ear of anyone to hear the Word of God at any time, in any age. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). "If any man hath an ear, let him hear." Here again is the wedding of free will and election. "If any man" -- any man means any man. "If any man hath an ear" -- does not everybody have ears? Yes, but there are some people who do not hear although they have ears. There are people who simply do not listen at all -- they do not hear.

I had a neighbor who was retired, and his wife was a very wonderful person, but she talked a great deal. When he would go outside to work, he would remove his hearing aid from his ear. He did it, I discovered, for a purpose. He was pruning a tree one day when his wife came out of the house and talked a blue streak to him for about five minutes. All of a sudden she noticed that he did not have his hearing aid on. She said, "You haven't heard a word I've said!" He just kept on sawing, and she turned around and went back into the house. That was exactly what he wanted! He was out there to prune the tree and not to carry on a conversation.

There are a great many people who do not have a hearing aid to hear the Word of God -- they don't want to hear it. I would like to make it possible for every person in this country to study the Word of God with us through our radio Bible studies. But I do not have the wildest dream that everybody in the country is going to be studying the Word of God. I know that it will be only those who have an ear, an ear to hear the Word of God. "Any man" -- that's free will; that "hath an ear" is election; and this is the way God weds these two truths together.

"He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." What John is saying here is not for you and me -- at least, I hope it is not for you; I know it is not for me -- because, beginning with chapter 4, Revelation is dealing with future things which are beyond the church. The church (meaning all born-again believers in this age) will no longer be on earth. John is speaking to God's saints who will be in the world at that time. Remember that during the Tribulation the Antichrist will be the world dictator. Men are not going to buy or sell without his permission. They will not be able to travel without his permission. He will rule the world as no one has ever ruled in the past. God is saying to those who are His own, "Don't resist him." To begin with, it would not do you any good. The second thing is that this is "the patience and the dwellers therein to worship the first wild beast, whose wound of death was healed."

The second wild beast has a delegated authority from the first wild beast, which actually makes him subservient to him, but he is also on a par with him -- he has the same power.

This second wild beast leads in a movement to exterminate the harlot of [Revelation 17](#), which is the false church that will go into the Great Tribulation period. John does not even dignify that church by calling it a church; it is called a harlot. The true church, which has now left the earth, is called the bride of Christ. But here you have the last vestige of an apostate church with all of its humanism. The false prophet will offer the world something new to worship -- the first wild beast, the willful king, the Man of Sin, the last world dictator (see [Dan. 11:36-39](#); [Matt. 24:24](#); [2Thess. 2:3-10](#)). Here is presented to us this terrible second beast who will exalt the first beast to the place of worship.

"Whose wound of death was healed" reveals that both the first and the second beasts are healers and miracle workers. This is the big lie, the "strong delusion" that is going to come to the world.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down
from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those
miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying
to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image
to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live [[Rev. 13:13-14](#)].

And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven into the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth the dwellers on the earth through [Gr.: dia] the signs which it was given him to do in the presence of the wild beast; saying to the dwellers on the earth that they should make an image [Gr.: eikon] to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.

This false prophet is a worker of signs and miracles (see [Matt. 24:24](#)). Our Lord warned against this false prophet. His deception is that he apes Elijah in bringing down fire from heaven. He is a combination of Jannes and Jambres: "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" ([Exod. 7:11-12](#)). In other words, they were clever magicians, and I believe they had satanic power. This Beast in the end time will also have satanic power.

We read in [Matthew 3:11](#): "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." John the Baptist specifically said he had nothing to do with fire, but this false prophet is going to imitate Elijah.

The false prophet plays with fire until he is cast into the lake of fire (see [Rev. 19:20](#)). The world is taken in by this deception, with the exception of God's elect, those who are His - they cannot be deceived.

The false prophet shows his hand by causing to be made an image of the man of sin. The Greek word for image is eikon, which means "likeness." The big production is a likeness of the first beast that emphasizes the wound of death that was healed. It is interesting to

note that the Lord Jesus did not permit anything connected with His physical appearance to survive. But the likeness of the Antichrist will evidently be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, and I believe it is the abomination of desolation to which our Lord referred: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)" ([Matt. 24:15](#)). This is the abomination of desolation that is to appear, and although we cannot be dogmatic, we believe it will be this image of Antichrist, the first wild beast.

Wild Beast, Delusion Perpetrated On The World (13:15-17)

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name [[Rev. 13:15-17](#)].

And it was given to him to give breath [Gr.: pneuma] to the image of the wild beast, that the image of the wild beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slave, that there be given them a mark on their right hand or upon their forehead; and that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one having the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name.

"And it was given to him to give breath (the Greek word is pneuma) to the image of the wild beast." This is going to be a different kind of idol. Isaiah and all the prophets mention the fact that idols cannot speak. Paul also mentions it. But here is an idol that will speak. I think they will call all the scientists of the world to look at this image. The scientists will give a report that they cannot understand it, they cannot explain it and that it is a miracle. This is something that will cause the whole world to turn and worship the Beast.

He is now wedding religion and business, for you will have to have the mark of the Beast to do business. In John's day soldiers were branded by their commanders, slaves were branded by their masters, and those attached to certain pagan temples were branded by the mark of the god or goddess whom they served. Ptolemy Philopater had all Jews in Alexandria marked with the ivy leaf, which was the symbol of Dionysus. In our day a newspaper columnist who wrote an article entitled, "Living by the Numbers," deplored the fact that we have to carry so many different cards in our wallets and concluded with this paragraph:

It would simplify matters if the government would assign each of us a single all-purpose number which we would have tattooed across the forehead to spare us the trouble of carrying all these cards.

Don't misunderstand me. This is not the fulfillment of prophecy, but it sure shows how prophecy can come to pass. What is the mark of the Beast? It is not given us to know. We are not told, but that has not kept many expositors from telling us what it is!

Wild Beast, Designation (13:18)

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six [[Rev. 13:18](#)].

Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of man; and his number is six hundred and sixty and six.

"Here is wisdom" seems to be a rather ironical declaration when we consider the maze of speculation that has been accumulated through the centuries on this verse.

In the Greek there is a very beautiful arrangement of this number.

hexakosioi... -- ..600
hexekonta.... -- ...60
hex..... -- 6

A numerical value is attached to each letter to be sure, but we must let it stand there, for the visible number of the Beast and its meaning await the day of his manifestation. And I do not believe he has yet been manifested. This number has made a nice little jigsaw puzzle for a lot of people to play at, but, my friend, you will not know who he is until you get to the Great Tribulation period.

I would suggest that we not waste our time trying to identify a person by this number. Instead, we need to present Jesus Christ that we might reduce the population of those who have to go through the Great Tribulation period and who will therefore know what the number of the Beast is.

I am not anxious to know the number of the Beast, and I am thankful I will not have to live in that period. I am very thankful today that I know Jesus Christ as my Savior. Instead of spending time with Antichrist, I want to know Christ. I can say with Paul: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" ([Phil. 3:10](#)).

The only positive and important item for us today is that the first beast is a man. This teaches me not to trust man. "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" ([Jer. 17:5-8](#)).

The passage in Revelation does not interest me a bit as to what the number of the Beast is or who he is or anything about him, but it makes me want to know Jesus Christ more,

because my plan is to be with Him -- not because of who I am or what I have done, but because Jesus Christ died for me on the cross, and by His grace I will go into His presence.

Chapter 14

THEME: Looking to the end of the Great Tribulation

This chapter contains several events. It is an interlude in which we see the Lamb on Mount Zion, hear the proclamation of the everlasting gospel, the pronouncement of judgment upon Babylon and on those who receive the mark of the Beast, then the praise for those who die in the Lord, and the preview of Armageddon.

The chapter before us constitutes an hiatus in the series of seven performers. It is obvious that this interlude could not be fitted in between the sixth and seventh performers who are the two wild Beasts. Of course, they had to be considered together, as they are like Siamese twins, and the continuity between them could not be broken. Therefore, this interlude follows the seventh performer in recognition of the logical sequence of this book, which is not a hodgepodge of visions but unfolds in a logical, chronological, and mathematical order.

There are certain performers called to our attention in this chapter (others beside the seven whom we have seen previously) in order to give us a full-orbed view of the spectacular events of the previous two chapters. As we have seen, this is the darkest day and the most horrible hour in the history of the world. It is truly hell's holiday. Every thoughtful mind must inevitably ask the question, "How did God's people fare during this period? Could they remain faithful to the Lord through to the end with the overwhelming odds against them?" The answer is found in this chapter before us.

The Shepherd who began with 144,000 sheep is now identified with them as the Lamb. And notice that He doesn't have 143,999 sheep; He has 144,000 sheep -- He did not lose one! He redeemed them, He sealed them, and He kept them, for He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. These sheep are of a different fold from the one we are in today, and the Good Shepherd brought them through the Great Tribulation. That is the picture before us as we open this chapter. It is encouraging to know that the Lamb -- not the two Beasts -- is going to have the last word. And He is not a lamb that speaks like a dragon; He is the Lord Jesus Himself. And since He is going to have the final word, Babylon will fall -- the great political capital, the great commercial capital, and the great religious capital of the world during the Great Tribulation period. And the followers of the Beast will be judged.

Although many of Christ's own will become martyrs during the Tribulation, they will not lose; they will win! Again I say with Calvin that I would rather be on the side that seems to be losing today but will win finally than to be on the side that seems to be winning today but is going to lose eternally. I'm glad to be on the winning side. Christ will reward those who will be martyred for Him.

In chapter 19 we will see the Lamb returning to the earth. The morning is coming. The darkness will fade away, and the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

Picture Of The Lamb With 144,000 (14:1-5)

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads [[Rev. 14:1](#)].

"I saw" indicates that John is still the spectator to these events. The reel continues to roll, and the story continues to unfold.

The "Lamb" is the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have seen in chapters 5 -- 7 and 12 -- 13.

"Mount Sion" is at Jerusalem. There is no use trying to locate this at any other place than at Jerusalem in the land of Israel.

This verse pictures a placid, pastoral scene which opens the millennial kingdom here upon this earth. The Lord Jesus is going to reign from Jerusalem. God Himself called it the city of the great King. And in [Psalm 2:6](#) He says this: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." It is the Father's intention to place the Lord Jesus upon the throne of David in Jerusalem, and specifically at Mount Sion.

"An hundred forty and four thousand" I believe to be the ones who were sealed back in chapter 7, although I recognize that there are some problems connected with this view. They came through the Great Tribulation like the three Hebrew children came through the fiery furnace.

Notice that the Lamb is standing with them on Mount Sion. Although He is in His person the Lamb, He is also the Shepherd. Remember that He started out with 144,000 and that He came through the Great Tribulation with 144,000. He didn't lose one.

My friend, in our day when the pressures of Satan bear us down, the living, victorious Christ is available to us. Oh, that you and I might come to know Him better and that He might occupy a greater place in our lives day by day. I am convinced in my own experience that the Lord Jesus Christ in person is the answer. When I see plaques with the motto: "Jesus is the Answer," I always say that it depends on what the question is. But certainly He is the answer to problems for which men are trying to work out solutions by some little method. They will tell you that if you follow their little legal system, you can solve the problems of your personal life, your home, your work, and your church. I doubt that there ever was a day in which there was so much teaching in all of these areas, and yet there is less victorious living in the daily experience of believers. What is the real problem today? We don't need a method; we need Christ. We need to know Him in a meaningful way. We need to draw closer to Him. By the way, when was the last time that you told Him that you loved Him? He has said that He loves you, and you ought to tell Him that in return.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth [[Rev. 14:2-3](#)].

"I heard." John is not only a spectator but is also an auditor to this scene.

The 144,000 join the heavenly chorus in the Millennium. My friend, have you ever heard a choir of 144,000 voices? Well, up to this time earth has been out of tune with heaven, but here the rule of Satan is over, and the earth and heaven are in tune. What Browning said about God's being in His heaven and all's right with the world is going to be true when we get to the Millennium. All's wrong with the world right now, but in that day all will be right. The 144,000 learn the new song and join the harmony of heaven.

"I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." God has put His harpers in heaven while the 144,000 are on earth, on Mount Sion (that is a long way from the instruments). Having been a pastor for many years, I have heard many harpers -- harping about this or that, but these are a different kind of harper. The harpers I have listened to were not musical, I can assure you. But these heavenly harpers are going to make beautiful music.

"The hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth" means that they have been purchased to enter the Millennium on earth. They are not taken to heaven. Remember that this is a picture of the Millennium on earth, and these will live on the earth. The unsaved are not going to live on the earth.

"And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." No one can sing praises to God but the redeemed. I wish that truth could be gotten over to a great many song leaders in this day in which we live. I understand their desire to hear everybody in the congregation sing, but when they have a mixed audience of saved and unsaved people, they should not ask the unsaved to sing the songs of redemption. Don't ask them to sing:

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
"Amazing Grace"
-- John Newton

If an unsaved person sings that, you have made him a liar. Just let the redeemed sing. The psalmist wrote: "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" ([Ps. 107:1-2](#)). My friend, no one but the redeemed are going to say God is good. This is the reason we need a say-so Christianity in our day. We need to say that God is good.

But in this millennial scene, heaven and earth are brought into marvelous harmony. What a contrast this is to chapter 13 where earth is in rebellion against heaven under the Beasts. Here all is tranquility under the Lamb.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God [[Rev. 14:4-5](#)].

These are they that were not defiled (besmirched) with women; for they are virgins [Gr.: parthenoi]. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.

"Were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." What does that mean? To be frank with you, it used to puzzle me. It can have a literal or spiritual meaning, and I think it includes both. The Great Tribulation is a period of unparalleled suffering. The 144,000 have been through that period. The abnormal times demanded an abnormal state. That was the reason they were unmarried. When I was a boy, I remember a young fellow who went to war during World War I. He was engaged to a girl, but he never came home. I know other boys who married right before they left, and they fathered children that they never saw. That was wartime. And many girls said that they wished they had not married during that time. Well, during the Tribulation period the times are going to be so frightful that it will be wise not to get married. You may remember that the prophet Jeremiah also lived in a critical period, the time of the Babylonian captivity. Because of the dark days, God forbade him to marry: "The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth" ([Jer. 16:1-4](#)).

Our Lord Jesus mentioned those who would be mothers during the Great Tribulation: "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" ([Matt. 24:19](#)).

You and I are living in a day when marriage is honorable and even encouraged. However, God's injunction to Noah to multiply and replenish the earth is hardly the Scripture to apply to a world faced with a population explosion and at a time when believers can see the approach of the end of the age.

During the Great Tribulation there will be an exaggerated emphasis upon sex, and obviously immorality will prevail. The 144,000 will have kept themselves aloof from the sins of the Great Tribulation.

Now, considering adultery in the spiritual sense, in the Old Testament idolatry was classified as spiritual fornication. The classic example is in [Ezekiel 16](#) where we find God's severe indictment against Israel for fornication and adultery -- which was idolatry. The 144,000 will also have kept themselves from the worship of the Beast and his image during the Great Tribulation.

Therefore, the comment, "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins," is probably referring to chastity in both the literal sense and the spiritual sense. And this makes good sense, by the way.

"Firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" has definite reference to the nation Israel. "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruits be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" ([Rom. 11:15-16](#)). So Israel is described as the firstfruits, especially the 144,000. I believe that they will occupy a unique place in the millennial kingdom. They evidently will be the vanguard with the Lamb when He returns to set up the Kingdom, as we will see in chapter 19.

"In their mouth was found no lie" means that they did not participate in the big lie of the Beast when he used lying wonders. They didn't fall for his lie. Remember that the Lord Jesus said that if it were possible to deceive the very elect, they would be deceived. But they will not be deceived.

"They are without blemish." Are they without blemish because they have been purified by the Great Tribulation? No. They are without blemish because they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And, friend, that's the way I am going to heaven, also. I'm not going to heaven because I think I am good, because I know that I am not good. And don't look down your nose at me, because you are not good either. Both of us are sinners saved by the grace of God.

Proclamation Of The Everlasting Gospel (14:6-7)

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters [[Rev. 14:6-7](#)].

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel (good tidings) to proclaim unto (over) them that dwell (sit) on the earth, and unto (over) every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he saith with a great voice, Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of water.

"Another angel" denotes another radical change in protocol of God's communication with the earth. This angel is the first in a parade of six "another" angels mentioned in [Rev. 14:8-9](#), [15](#), and [Rev. 14:17-18](#).

During our age the gospel has been committed to men, and they alone are the messengers of it. Angels would like to give the message of the gospel, but they have not been permitted to do so. At the beginning of the Great Tribulation men are the messengers of God, as the 144,000 reveal. Even the two witnesses with supernatural power could not stand up against Satan, but were removed from the satanic scene of earth. Angels as well as men were the messengers of the Old Testament -- ". . . the word spoken by angels was

stedfast . . ." ([Heb. 2:2](#)). The times are so intense in the Great Tribulation period that only angels can get the messages of God through to the world. Angels are indestructible.

"Flying in mid heaven" was a ridiculous statement a few years ago, and some of the critics of the Bible laughed at such a thing. It is no longer a ridiculous statement to a generation that has been treated to television via satellite. Worldwide television is a practical reality so that we don't have to wait for the evening news to learn what is happening in Israel or England or Japan, we can see it just as it is happening. And the angel whom John mentions "flying mid heaven" will serve as a broadcasting station to the entire world.

"An eternal gospel." The question naturally arises, How is this the gospel, since the word gospel means "good news"? Is this angel bringing good news? Yes, it is good news to those who are God's children, but it is bad news for the unbelievers.

"Fear God" is the message of this "eternal gospel." That is the message. The writer of the Proverbs said that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In effect, the angel is saying to God's people, "Get wise, get smart, because you need to fear God. God saved you by His grace, but He is going to judge this earth." This is God's final call before the return of Christ in judgment.

Pronouncement Of Judgment On Babylon (14:8)

In this chapter God is bringing before us those who will appear again in the Book of Revelation, but He is giving us now more or less of a program which He is going to follow.

And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication [[Rev. 14:8](#)].

And another angel, a second, followed saying, Fell, fell is Babylon the great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

There is a book entitled The Two Babylons, by Alexander Hislop, which you ought to read. It is especially pertinent in these days in which you and I live. It reveals that Babylon has been Satan's headquarters from the very beginning. Babylon is the place where idolatry began. Semiramis was the wife of Nimrod; some scholars think that she was his mother and that she married her own son. She was queen of Babel, which later became Babylon, and she devised a nice little story (beginning a whole system of idolatry) in which she came out of an egg in the Euphrates River -- she cracked the shell and stepped out fully grown. The worship of Semiramis introduced the female principle in the deity. This reveals that Babylon was the fountainhead of false religions.

"Fell, fell is Babylon." This second angel runs ahead and announces that which is yet to come as though it had already taken place. In the original Greek, "fell" is in the prophetic aorist tense. In other words, God's prophetic word is so sure that He speaks as though the event had already taken place. It is just as sure as if it were history already.

The city of Babylon will evidently be rebuilt during the Great Tribulation period. If you have my book on Isaiah, you will see that I deal with the probability in chapter 13. I

believe that ancient Babylon will be rebuilt, though not at the same location, and that judgment upon it, which is predicted in the Book of Isaiah, is yet to come.

The idolatry of Babylon is a divine intoxication which will fascinate the entire world. This is the reason we are seeing so much experimentation in our day with Satan worship, exorcism, and all the cults which are definitely satanic. Notice what the Old Testament prophets have said about it: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" ([Jer. 51:7](#)). If you could get away far enough and look back at this earth, I am of the opinion that you would be disappointed in mankind and in the nations of the world. Then in the prophecy of Isaiah we read: "And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible" ([Isa. 13:11](#)). This brings down the wrath of God upon the world (see [Jer. 25:15-26](#)). "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" ([Isa. 13:19](#)).

This is a judgment on Babylon that we are going to see: judgment upon religious Babylon in chapter 17 of Revelation and upon commercial Babylon in chapter 18.

Pronouncement Of Judgment On Those Who Receive The Mark Of The Beast (14:9-12)

It is probably true that those who live through all or most of the Great Tribulation do so because they had received the mark of the Beast. However, part of the Great Tribulation is not caused by Satan's being released but by Christ's judgment upon this earth. He will move personally and directly in putting down the rebellion against Him here on this earth.

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus [[Rev. 14:9-12](#)].

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled unmingled in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever (unto the ages of the ages); and they have no rest day and night, they

that worship the wild beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

He is speaking to a group of people who "keep the commandments of God," the Old Testament law. Scripture tells us that sacrifices will be brought during the Great Tribulation and even into the Millennium.

This section makes it crystal clear that no one can assume a neutral position during this intense period under the Beast. Even today we see Christian businessmen who are capitulating to the ethics of the hour. In chapter 13 we saw that the awful alternative for refusing to receive the mark of the Beast was starvation. On the other hand, the person who receives the mark brings down upon his head the wrath of God.

"He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God." If you believe that the church is going through the Great Tribulation, you also believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to subject His own to the mingled, unmixed cup of His anger. I simply cannot believe that Christ would do this to the church which He has redeemed.

"The wine of the wrath of God" is a figure adopted from the Old Testament. In [Psalm 75:8](#) we read: "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." The Old Testament prophets picked up that theme. They saw the cup of wrath filling up to the brim. God was patient and let man go on and on in his sin, but when the cup of wrath was filled, then God would press it to the lips of a godless society. Rebellious men kept building this thing up until judgment had to break.

"Tormented with fire and brimstone." Now let me say that if this is not literal fire and brimstone, whatever it is must be worse than fire and brimstone. If it is a symbol, remember that a symbol is used to give a faint representation of the real. It is rather like the essence of something. There is the essence of pepper and the essence of perfume. Essence is the faint odor that is left in the bottle after the substance is gone. A symbol is an essence or just a faint copy of the real thing, and the reality can be much worse than the symbol indicates. But remember, the brimstone of Sodom was quite literal. That is a fact you should mull over in your mind if you want to reject a literal hell.

You will notice in this passage that hell is visible to Christ and the holy angels. It does not say that hell is visible to the twenty-four elders. Are we to assume from that that the church does not know what is taking place on the earth? I am inclined to believe that the church will not see what is taking place on the earth during the Great Tribulation period, but certainly Christ and the holy angels will see it.

All that God's own can do during this period is to be patient and wait for the coming of Christ. Our Lord said: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" ([Matt. 24:13](#)). Why will he endure? He will endure because he has been sealed by the Spirit of God, and he is clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He is able to overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Our Lord said, "In your patience possess ye your souls" ([Luke](#)

[21:19](#)). All they can do is wait out the storm, and that is what they will do during the Great Tribulation.

Praise For Those Who Die In The Lord (14:13)

Here again is a verse that is taken to a funeral in our day, and certainly to use it at a funeral completely robs it of its application. This verse refers only to the Great Tribulation period:

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them [[Rev. 14:13](#)].

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, said the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors (sorrows), for their works follow with them.

Apparently many of God's tribulation saints, both of the 144,000 and of the untold number of Gentiles that will be saved during that time, are going to lay down their lives for Christ. They will be martyred. During the time of the Great Tribulation, it will be better to die than to live. At that time this verse will give comfort and assurance. They will have rest from their sorrows, and their works will follow them, and the Lord will reward them.

As I have said, this is not a verse for God's saints in comfortable, affluent America, as I see it. For most of us it is unnatural to want to die. I feel as Paul expressed it: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again" ([Phil. 1:23-26](#)).

Personally, I would like to stay down here for quite a few more years and teach the Word of God. I am in no hurry to get to heaven. This old story illustrates my viewpoint: A black boy in my southland years ago went to church on a Sunday night. The preacher asked, "How many of you want to go to heaven?" Everybody but this boy put up his hand. The preacher looked at him and asked, "Son, don't you want to go to heaven?" "Sure," the boy answered, "but I thought you were getting up a load for tonight!"

Well, I don't want to be on that load leaving tonight either. I'm going there ultimately, but I would like to live and serve as long as possible. For me it would be unnatural to want to die, but in the Great Tribulation it will be a different story. They will just be waiting in patience and in sorrow. If they are martyred, it will be a wonderful thing. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." He is going to reward them for their faithfulness to Himself.

You can see that this verse is not appropriate for a funeral, especially for a wealthy man who has been living in clover all of his life. In Texas I heard it used at a rich man's funeral, a man who had been brought up in a home of wealth. He had never known what it was to lift his little finger in actual work. He just toyed around with a ranch and lost

money on it -- he had so much money, he had to get rid of it some way. Yet the preacher applied this verse to him! That is a terrible abuse of the Word of God. Death is going to be precious to the people in the Great Tribulation but not for the saints of our society in which everything is geared to comfort.

"For their works follow with them" reveals that they will be rewarded for their faithfulness, patience, and works in this period. God does not save anyone for his works, but He does reward us for our works. Our works (good or bad) are like tin cans tied to a dog's tail; we cannot get away from them. They will follow us to the bema seat of Christ.

Preview Of Armageddon (14:14-20)

And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle [[Rev. 14:14](#)].

"I looked, and behold" emphasizes the fact that John is not only a hearer but a spectator.

"A white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man" is evidently the Lord Jesus Christ. The cloud is a mark of identification: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" ([Matt. 24:30](#)). I think that the "clouds" are the shekinah cloud, which is "the sign" in heaven.

"On his head a golden crown" further confirms this One as the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the hero of the Book of Revelation, my friend, and you need this book to get a true picture of Him. He is seen as King -- not as Prophet or Priest. His office as King is always connected with His return to the earth.

"A sharp sickle" establishes this and speaks of the judgment of the wicked. Dr. Newell calls attention to something that is quite interesting: he notes that the word sickle occurs only twelve times in the Scriptures, of which seven are in the verses of this section. Also, the word sharp occurs seven times in the Revelation, and four times in this chapter.

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped [[Rev. 14:15-16](#)].

And another angel came out of the temple, crying in a great voice to the One seated on the cloud. Send forth thy sickle, and reap; for the hour is come to reap; for the harvest of the earth was dried. And He that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

"Send forth thy sickle, and reap" refers to the judgment of men on the earth. "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" ([Matt. 13:40-42](#)). In Matthew the "harvest" has so

long been identified with Christian witnessing, and believers have been urged to pray for laborers for the harvest, that it is difficult for the average Christian to fit this scene into the true context of Scripture. Actually, believers are not urged to harvest today; they are urged to sow, to sow the Word of God.

"... a sower went forth to sow" ([Matt. 13:3](#)) is a picture of Christendom today. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. He is the sower and the seed is the Word of God and the field is the world. He is flinging out the seed into the world. There is going to be a harvest someday, but that will come at the end of the age. You and I are not in the harvesting business today. Our business is to sow the seed. That is the reason I do not worry about results. I worry a great deal about the source. I want to do my best in giving out the Word of God. Why? Because sowing seed is my business. I am not really concerned about the number of folk who claim to have been converted through my ministry. I just sow the seed. Christ is the One who is going to have the harvest, and the harvest is the judgment at the end of the age. This is the picture given to us here in the Revelation.

Note God's instructions to His Son in the Old Testament: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" ([Ps. 2:7-9](#)). Did this take place at the Lord's first coming? No. This is no missionary text. When, then, will it take place? It will take place at Christ's second coming to earth. At that time He will come in judgment.

"For the hour is come to reap" is in conformity to the words of Jesus, "... the harvest is the end of the world . . ." ([Matt. 13:39](#)). The time will come to reap, so let's sow the seed today, and let's not be so everlastingly busy trying to get somebody's hand up and have that one come forward to receive Christ as Savior. Let's make sure that we give out the Word of God, and the Spirit of God will take care of the results.

The time of harvest is set before us in the Old Testament: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" ([Joel 3:13-14](#)).

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe [[Rev. 14:17-18](#)].

And another angel came out from the sanctuary which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath (having) power over the fire, and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

"The sanctuary which is in heaven" identifies this with the Old Testament, not with the church.

The "sharp sickle" indicates judgment. "Her grapes are fully ripe" conveys the thought of their being dry like raisins. This is a change of metaphor for the War of Armageddon, and this is the picture Isaiah gives: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth" ([Isa. 63:1-6](#)).

This vivid picture is not of Christ at His first coming but of Christ when He returns in judgment. In Isaiah's day men would get into the winepress barefooted to tread out the grapes. The red juice would spurt out of the ripe grapes and stain their garments. The picture in this verse is of spectators seeing that there is blood on our Lord's beautiful garments as though He had trodden the winepress. When Christ came the first time, He shed His blood for them, but they have rejected it. Now He is trodding down the wicked, and it is their blood that is shed. He will gather them, as we will see in [Revelation 16:16](#), "into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." It is not a single battle but a war -- the War of Armageddon (Heb.: Har-Megiddon).

Notice in this passage from Isaiah's prophecy that He is seen treading the winepress alone. It is positively terrifying. Little wonder that the men of this earth will cry to the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. This will be the sad end of that civilization which at the Tower of Babel demonstrated an active rebellion against God, a rebellion which has been mounting like a mighty crescendo ever since and will break in all of its fury during the Great Tribulation period. As we will see when we come to chapter 19, when Christ comes He will put down that rebellion against God in order to establish His Kingdom here upon the earth. He will (in the language of [Psalm 2](#)) "break them with a rod of iron" and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

You see, the "gentle Jesus" who wouldn't swat a fly, whom we have heard so much about, is just not the Jesus of the Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, but He is also the Judge of all the world. If you do not accept His blood shed for you, then if the Great Tribulation period comes during your lifetime, your blood will be shed.

My feeling is that no careful study of the Word of God would lead any person of reasonable intelligence to believe that the church is going through this awful period. Folk who want to push the church into the Great Tribulation seem to think that it will be no more unpleasant than a trip to the dentist to get a tooth pulled. Such a trip is not pleasant; no one enjoys having a tooth pulled, but it can be endured. My friend, if that is in your

thinking, you just haven't seen what the Tribulation really will be. Isaiah gives us another picture of it: "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. . . . The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea" ([Isa. 34:1-3, 6](#)).

What a picture this is! The precious blood of the Lamb having been rejected, the blood of those who defied God and followed and worshiped the Beast bathes the earth. It is frightful. As a ripe grape is mashed and the juice flies in every direction, so will little man fall into the vat of God's judgment. This is Armageddon -- the mount of slaughter.

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs [[Rev. 14:19-20](#)].

And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

"Without the city" means outside of Jerusalem.

"Unto the bridles of the horses" means about four feet deep.

"A thousand and six hundred furlongs" is about 185 miles, and that is the distance from Dan to Beer-sheba. All of Palestine is the scene of this final war which ends in what is called Armageddon. It is a campaign beginning about the middle of the Great Tribulation and is concluded by the personal return of Christ to the earth. [Psalm 45:3-7](#) is an Old Testament prediction of this: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." [Psalm 45](#) is a messianic psalm.

Let me make it clear that I make no apology for these scenes of judgment. God has not asked me to apologize for His Word. He has told me to give it out. We need to face up to the facts:

1. Sin is an awful thing.
2. Sin is in the world.

3. You and I are sinners. The only remedy for sin is the redemption Christ offered when He shed His blood on the cross and paid the penalty for our sins.

4. You and I merit the judgment of God. Our only escape is to accept the work of Christ for us on Calvary's cross. The Bible asks a question that even God cannot answer: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? . . ." ([Heb. 2:3](#)). Escape what? Escape judgment -- the Tribulation is judgment. The way out is to accept Christ. Call it an escape mechanism if you want to; but, my friend, when the house is on fire, I'll go out a window or any other way that is an escape. This judgment must inevitably come on Christ-rejectors. Mankind has rejected Him, trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing. If God is just (and He is) there will be judgment. The generation of today needs to hear this. Instead of being given this, they are offered endless little methods of living the Christian life. My friend, there is nothing that will straighten out your life like knowing that our God is a holy God, that the Lord Jesus Christ is righteous, and that He is not going to tolerate sin in your life.

And this same concept should be taught to our children. I am heartened to see that some psychologists are returning to this position. My friend, the problem with your little Willie is that he is a mean little brat and should be turned across your knee and spanked instead of being treated as a cross between a piece of Dresden china and an orchid. As someone has well said, the board of education should be applied to the seat of learning.

Before we leave this chapter, I would like to draw your attention again to the viewpoint which is abroad concerning the church's going through the Great Tribulation period. I have an article from a magazine that presents this viewpoint. The author of the article is a layman, and yet he has the audacity to write the following:

There is a shallow Christianity moving across our land. Those who do not have deep roots in Christ shrink from the idea that God would test His people with the Tribulation, or that He would use suffering to help the church make herself ready as a Bride for Christ. Very clearly, though, suffering is the pathway to glory. We are called to it. Why? "Because Christ also suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps." As a result of this thinking, I no longer teach Christians they will not have to go through the Tribulation. Maybe they won't, but I can do more for them by preparing them to face testing in His name than by teaching them that the Lord is going to rapture them out of the hour of trial.

In his article this layman also says, "There is a tremendous growth in that person who puts on the whole armor of God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day." My friend, I want you to know that the Great Tribulation is not called the "evil day." It is called the great day of God's wrath. That is how the Tribulation is described in the Bible. I don't know how anyone could read and study the Book of Revelation and believe that going through the Great Tribulation would purify the church or that the bride has to make herself ready! What do you think Christ did when He died on the cross? He made us ready there. We can never become worthy to enter into the presence of God. We are going to enter His presence "in Christ," and you can't add anything to that. You can't equate the hour of trial with the great day of the wrath of God that is going to come on this earth. The church will be delivered from that. The Book of Revelation has made that

clear. The 144,000 have already been identified for us as Israelites, and even the tribes are identified for us, so there is no way in the world of saying that this group is the church; nor is that great company "which no man could number" the church, the bride of Christ (see [Rev. 7:9](#)).

We have seen that God was able to keep the 144,000 during the Great Tribulation. So it is not a question of whether God can keep the church in the Great Tribulation period. Of course, He can keep the church if that is His will and plan. But, according to the Word of God, this is not His will and plan. The Lord Jesus said, "I am going to keep you from that hour that is coming on this earth," from that terrible time of testing that is coming. I would like to put it like this: The church is not going through the Great Tribulation period, but we are going through the little tribulation. All of us have troubles and trials, and I don't know of a Christian who doesn't have problems and difficulties. It seems like the more spiritually mature the saint of God is, the more he suffers. This is the method God uses to develop his children. We never become wonderful saints of God. We are just His little children, immature and undeveloped. When we come into His presence, we will be accepted because of what Christ has done for us, not because we have endured the Great Tribulation.

Another point to consider is that most of the church has already missed the Great Tribulation. For over nineteen hundred years believers have been going into the presence of Christ through the doorway of death. I hope you don't believe that God is going to send them back to earth so they can go through the Great Tribulation period! At best there will be only a small percentage of believers who are still alive when the time of tribulation comes upon the earth. The great majority of the church has already missed the Great Tribulation.

I have always had the impression that the folk who believe that the church will go through the Great Tribulation feel that our crowd needs it, and specifically that I need it, that I deserve to go through it. Well, I agree that I do deserve it, and I also deserve hell. But I'm not going to hell because Christ bore it for me, and I have trusted in Him. Neither am I going through the Great Tribulation. Why? Because Christ died for me, and He saves me by His grace. Isn't the One who says that He is rich in grace able to deliver me out of the Great Tribulation?

It is true that God allows us to go through the little tribulation of this life. After having cancer and several major operations, I feel as if I have been through the little tribulation period. And it is by this method that God refines us and purifies us. A preacher friend said to me recently, "I can tell a difference in your ministry since you have gone through those illnesses." I trust that he is correct in that. I know God allowed it for a purpose.

When I read the article by the brother who thinks the church should go through the Great Tribulation, I wondered if he had ever really suffered for Christ. A preacher friend of mine who holds this view was discussing it as we were having lunch together one day. As he was eating a T-bone steak, he talked as nonchalantly about the Great Tribulation as if it would not be any worse than the church wading through a river or enduring a very hot summer or experiencing an energy shortage. He apparently did not think of it as being the

terrible time which is depicted in the Book of Revelation. Is God misrepresenting the facts to us? Is He just trying to scare us?

Well, my friend, there are places in this book where God uses symbols. Do you know why He uses symbols? He doesn't do it in order to evaporate the facts so that we can dismiss them, but because the reality which the symbol represents is lots worse than the symbol. Many of the things which John tries to describe to us beggar description. Even God cannot communicate some of them to us -- not because He is not able, but because we are dull of hearing, as He has told us. We don't always understand. I am afraid that a great many folk just do not realize that the Great Tribulation is a terrible thing, and it is miraculous that the 144,000 will come through it. He won't lose one of them. Why? Because they will be big, strong, robust fellows? No. They will overcome by the blood of the Lamb. That's how they will do it.

Chapter 15

THEME: Preparation for final judgment of the Great Tribulation

In this chapter we have another sign in heaven, seven angels with the seven last plagues. Chapters 15 and 16 belong together because in them we have the pouring out of the seven mixing bowls of wrath. I imagine that you thought the worst was over, but the worst is yet to come. We have already seen the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven personalities. Now the coming seven bowls of wrath are the worst of all. Chapter 15, besides being the shortest chapter in Revelation, is the preface to the final series of judgments which come on the earth during the Great Tribulation. These judgments are the most intense and devastating of any that have preceded them.

The purpose of the Great Tribulation is judgment. It is not for the purifying of the church! It is to give Satan his final opportunity. God is going to remove the church before this time of tribulation because of His marvelous, infinite grace. If you are willing to accept His grace, then you can escape the Great Tribulation. Believe me, the bowls of wrath are not the "blessed hope" for which believers are looking. No, we are "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)). If we will grow in love with Him, we will not consider the judgments of the Great Tribulation terrifying. You don't have to stick your head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and refuse to read the Book of Revelation. My friend, if you are trusting Christ, you won't be going through it. But you need to know what the unsaved will have to go through, and that might make you a zealous witness for Christ in these difficult days.

Someone said of Dwight L. Moody that in his day he looked into the faces of more people than any man who ever lived and that he reduced the population of hell by two million. We hear a lot of talk about reducing the population explosion of this earth. Well, hell has had a population explosion for many years, and I would like to help reduce that.

Before these angels begin to pour out their bowls of wrath, there may be the question still in the minds of some if any believers were able to stand up against the Antichrist. If that

question has not been answered to the satisfaction of the reader, it is answered here. There will be those who will be enabled to stand.

First of all, we will see the preparation for the final judgment of the Great Tribulation.

Tribulation Saints In Heaven Worship God (15:1-4)

In the first four verses we see that the Tribulation saints in heaven worship God because He is holy and just. This is another interlude.

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God [[Rev. 15:1](#)].

And I saw another sign in (the) heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, which are the last, for in them (was) finished the wrath of God.

This will bring us to the end of the Great Tribulation period. I don't know about you, but I will be glad to get to the end of it. And then we will see the coming of Christ to the earth.

"And I saw" assures us that John is still a spectator to these events. He is attending the dress rehearsal of the last act of man's little day upon the earth.

"Another sign" connects this chapter with [Revelation 12:1](#), the first sign which, in the opening of chapter 12, was Israel. These seven angels of wrath are connected with the judgments to follow until Christ comes (see ch. 19). From chapter 12 to the return of Christ is a series of events which are mutually related. This does not mean that there is a chronological order but rather a logical order of retracing the same events with added detail. This method is the personal signature of the Holy Spirit, seen first in [Genesis 1](#) -- [Genesis 2](#). In [Genesis 1](#) we are given the account of the Creation, the seven days describing God's handiwork. In chapter 2 the Holy Spirit lifted out the account of the creation of man and went over it again, adding details. It is known as the law of recapitulation, and it runs all the way through the Scriptures. For another example, we have the giving of the Mosaic Law in Exodus and then in Deuteronomy the interpretation of the Law with forty years of experience in the wilderness and a great deal of detail added. Also, when we come to the New Testament, we find not one, not two, but four Gospel records because it takes four to give the many sides of the glorious person of Christ who came to earth over nineteen hundred years ago.

Satan, having been cast into the earth, brings down his wrath upon the remnant of Israel. Also, he makes a final thrust for world domination through the two Beasts. Then God makes a final display of His wrath and concludes earth's sordid tragedy of sin. "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" ([Ps. 110:1](#)).

"Was finished" in the Greek language is in the prophetic aorist tense, which considers an event in the future as already accomplished.

"The wrath of God" marks the final judgment of the Great Tribulation. God has been slow to anger, but here ends His longsuffering. Judgment in the final stages of the Day of

Wrath proceeds from God, not from Satan or the wild Beast. It comes directly from the throne of God. God will judge.

And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God [[Rev. 15:2](#)].

And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire, and them that came off victorious from the wild beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by (on the shore of) the glassy sea, having harps of God.

"A glassy sea mingled with fire" represents the frightful persecution by the Beast during the Great Tribulation period. This is the period of time, as we have seen, where no man could buy or sell unless he had the mark of the Beast. It is going to be very difficult to get things to eat in that day. That is the reason the Lord Jesus, speaking of this period in His Olivet Discourse, said that whoever would give a cup of cold water in His name would not lose his reward. You see, anyone in that day who would give even a cup of cold water to one of the 144,000 would put his life in jeopardy because the Beast would put him to death for harboring what he would classify as a criminal.

Those will be very difficult days. Again I ask the question: Will anyone make it through the Great Tribulation? No, they won't unless they are sealed. Although multitudes will be martyred during this period -- and I think that a great many of the 144,000 will lay down their lives for Jesus -- they will be faithful to Him until death. As we have seen, all of the 144,000 will be with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

"And them that came off victorious" -- here are the Tribulation saints who have come through the fires of persecution on the earth and yet have not lost their song. They have the harps of God, and in the next couple of verses we will see that they are able to sing, and they do sing.

How about us today, Christian friend? We are not in the Great Tribulation now and never will be, but even in these days are you having trouble keeping from your heart just a little root of bitterness? We are warned against this in [Hebrews 12:15](#) because it is so easy for it to happen. Maybe this has no application to you, but it does have application to me. When I was in my teens, I came to know the Lord and at seventeen or eighteen made my decision to study for the ministry. I expected the Christians to support me in my decision. One wealthy family in Nashville actually turned against me. I was dating their daughter at the time, and they didn't want a poor preacher in the family. A teenage boy feels these things most keenly, I guess, but even to this day I have to fight that little root of bitterness against that class of people who treated me so badly at that time. Now that wasn't tribulation at all. It was a heartbreak, but it was not a Great Tribulation by any means.

What about that little root of bitterness? Are you having a problem with it? I meet people, Christian people, who have let that little root of bitterness spoil their lives to the point that it actually causes them to deteriorate in their Christian life and testimony. I know of a lovely Christian family back East. Something happened that caused them to become very bitter towards another family, and they refused to let it go. That root of bitterness has entered into their lives. I have seen the family sitting in church on Sunday without a smile

on one of the faces. Bitterness can ruin your Christian life. We need to pray, in the face of life's circumstances, that there will be no root of bitterness within us.

It is remarkable to see that these Tribulation saints who have lived through the horror of the Great Tribulation have kept their song!

Let me share a poem on prayer with you. It was sent to me by one of our radio listeners.

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered.
Her feet were firmly planted on the rock.
Amid the wildest storm she stands undaunted
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer
And cries, It shall be done sometime, somewhere.
Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say ungranted.
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done.
The work began when your first prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what He has begun.
If you will keep the incense burning there,
His glory you will see, sometime, somewhere.
"Sometime, Somewhere"
-- Ophelia Guyon Browning

My friend, in this life which you and I are living down here, a little bitterness will come in. What will we do about it? We need to pray. In fact, we need to pray about this more than anything else. If these saints can come through the Great Tribulation and still sing, you and I certainly ought to have a song in our hearts regardless of our circumstances.

The psalmist wrote, "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" ([Ps. 30:5](#)). I have learned over the years that God will never let anyone cross your pathway, not even an enemy, unless it will teach you a lesson. He permits it for a purpose, for the development of your character. We need to be in prayer that we not fall into the trap of Satan and lose the joy of our salvation.

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest [[Rev. 15:3-4](#)].

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages (nations). Who shall not fear, Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts were made manifest.

If you want to learn "the song of Moses," you will find it in [Exodus 15:1-21](#) and [Deuteronomy 32:1-43](#). Both songs speak of God's deliverance, salvation, and faithfulness. "The song of the Lamb" is the ascription of praise to Christ as the Redeemer. We have seen that in [Revelation 5:9-12](#).

Again let me call your attention to the fact that the Book of Revelation is Christocentric, that is, Christ-centered. Don't let the four horsemen carry you away, or don't be distracted by the blowing of the trumpets or by the seven performers. And don't let your interest center on these bowls of wrath. Let's keep our eyes centered on Christ. He is in charge; He is the Lord. In this book we have the unveiling of Jesus Christ in His holiness, in His power, and in His glory. The Man Christ Jesus is wonderful! He is the One who can put His hand in the hand of God and who can put His other hand in the hand of man and bring them together. He can do this because He is God.

"King of the ages" has two other renderings, King of saints and King of the nations. Any rendering indicates that Christ will be the object of universal worship and acknowledgment. There will be no place where He will not be worshiped.

"Who shall not fear, Lord, and glorify thy name?" In our day there is very little reverential fear of God, even among believers. We have been caught up in this love attitude, and I don't think we should lose sight of the fact that God is love. But God is also light, which means He is holy. God is moving in on churches and dealing with Christians as I have never seen Him do before. I am one Christian who can testify to that. If you are God's child, you had better not do as you please. If you think God would mind sending you a little trouble, you are wrong. God is to be feared. Our God is a holy God.

"Nations shall come and worship before thee." The day will come when nations will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not true of nations today. That little prayer breakfast in Washington is a pretty sorry substitute for universal worship of God. One man used that prayer breakfast as an argument that we are living in a Christian nation. What nonsense! We are not living in a Christian nation, but there will come a day when every nation will worship Him. This knowledge should cause us to take heart as we see our own nation moving in the wrong direction. The day will come when God will remove the rebellious men and leave only those who will worship Him.

In [Psalm 2:8](#) we read, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen [nations] for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The nations are going to be His. And in [Isaiah 11:9](#): "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." In that day there will be no need for our Thru the Bible study because all men are going to have a knowledge of God. In [Jeremiah 23:5](#) we are told, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

It is true that our country has been through awful travail, but we have been so engrossed in our own problems that our hearts have grown weary from all the scandal. Other nations, however, have had this same problem. Today it is nauseating to see the immorality, the godlessness, and the injustice in the world. If I weren't a Christian, I would be one of the most radical persons you have ever met. As a child of God, I can see what is happening in the world, but I know I cannot remedy one thing. But Christ is going to reign someday, and He is going to execute judgment and justice in the earth. Thank God for that! I get so tired of politicians telling me that they represent me in Washington and that they are going to do what I want them to do -- when all the time

they are doing everything they can for their own interests. With rare exceptions, this is equally true of each political party. In the face of gross immorality and gross injustice, what can we do? Well, all of us who are God's children need to pray for our country and rejoice that there is coming One who will execute justice and judgment upon the earth.

In [Philippians 2:9-11](#) we read this: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Those who are in hell will not acknowledge Him as their Redeemer, but they are going to acknowledge that He is the boss, He is running the universe, and it belongs to Him. And they are going to acknowledge the glory of God -- they will have to do that.

"For thy righteous acts were made manifest." This testimony, coming from witnesses of this period, is inexpressibly impressive and should settle in the minds of believers the fact that God is right in all that He does. What God is doing may not look right to you, but if you don't think God is doing the right thing, you are wrong, not God. We need to adjust our attitudes and our thinking. Notice the testimony of the Psalms: "Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins" ([Ps. 7:9](#)). "For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" ([Ps. 11:7](#)). "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. . . . He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. . . . The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth" ([Ps. 107:1](#), [40](#), [42](#)). This will happen when God takes charge.

Tabernacle Opened In Heaven For Angels With Seven Bowls (15:5-8)

At this point the temple of the tabernacle is opened in heaven in order that seven angels, having seven golden bowls, might proceed forth.

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles [[Rev. 15:5-6](#)].

And after these things I saw, and the sanctuary (temple) of the tabernacle [Gr.: skenes] of the testimony (witness) in (the) heaven was opened; and there came out from the temple (the) seven angels, having the seven plagues, clothed in linen (precious stone) pure and white, and girt about the breast with golden girdles.

The "temple" is referred to fifteen times in the Book of Revelation. Its prominence cannot be ignored. In the first part of Revelation, through chapter 3, the church is the subject and there is no mention of a temple. Beginning with chapter 4 the scene shifts to heaven, and we see the temple in heaven; also there is a temple on earth patterned after the one in heaven. There is no temple in New Jerusalem where the church is going. Why? Because the church is not identified with a temple. This fact makes it abundantly clear that,

beginning with chapter 4, God is dealing with people who have had a temple, and only to Israel had God given a temple, patterned after the one in heaven. In this instance, the reference is specifically to the tabernacle (skenes) and the Holy of Holies in which the ark of the testimony was kept. In the ark were the tables of stone. Both the tabernacle and the tables of stone were duplicates of originals in heaven. "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" ([Exod. 25:40](#)). "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" ([Heb. 9:23](#)).

The originals are referred to in [Revelation 11:19](#): "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." The action of God here is based on the violation of His covenant with Israel -- the broken Law. God is righteous in what He is about to do. He will judge, then He will carry out His covenant with Israel.

The prominence of angels in this book is again called to our attention by the appearance of angels at this point. Previously, seven angels blew on seven trumpets. Here is the new series of seven angels who have the seven plagues of the seven bowls of wrath. The departure of the angels from the temple demonstrates that they depart from the throne of mercy, and now God acts in justice instead of in mercy.

"Clothed in linen." The angels are clothed in linen -- another meaning is clothed with precious stones. It is an enigmatic expression due to a variant reading in the text. Were they clothed in linen or a stone? The intention, it seems, is to describe their garments as studded and set with precious stones. Though their garments identify them in a priestly activity, they forsake that work of mercy for plagues of judgment.

The "golden girdles" reveal the angels in the livery of Christ, who no longer is exercising a priestly function but is seen here judging the world.

And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled [[Rev. 15:7-8](#)].

And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls, full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the sanctuary (temple) was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no one was able to enter into the sanctuary (temple), till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

"Seven angels seven golden vials." Again let me call your attention to the repetition of the number seven. I sometimes hear it said that seven is the number of perfection, which is not exactly accurate. It is the number of completeness, and sometimes completeness is perfection. For example, in six days God created heaven and earth and rested on the seventh day -- not only because it was complete, but because it was perfect. But here in the Revelation the series of sevens denotes a completion. My feeling is that we have a complete history of the church in the seven churches, and that we have a complete Great

Tribulation period in each one of the series of sevens; in other words, each covers it all. First, in the seven seals we see a broad outline, then, as we read along in the prophecy, we see that God zeroes in and focuses on the last three and a half years.

"Bowls (vials), full of the wrath of God." Notice, they are not filled with the love of God but with God's wrath.

"The sanctuary (temple) was filled with smoke from the glory of God." The very fact that this section continues to deal with the temple ought to indicate to anyone who is knowledgeable that the church is not involved. Neither the temple nor the tabernacle had anything to do with the church. They present marvelous pictures of Christ which have spiritual applications for us today, but that does not mean that the church should build a temple or a tabernacle. Rather, this section refers to Israel, a people who had a tabernacle and a temple. A great many are reluctant to admit this fact because they dismiss Israel from the plan and purpose of God at the beginning of the New Testament. As you can see, the New Testament by no means dismisses Israel!

The "seven golden bowls" represent the final part of the Great Tribulation period. I think that "bowls" better describes the container than "vials" -- a vial makes me think of a little test tube that is used in a laboratory. Bowls were used in the service of the temple. For example, a bowl of blood was taken by the high priest one day each year into the Holy of Holies. And that bowl of blood spoke of redemption for sin.

These seven angels with priestly garments, having departed from the temple proper, are no longer engaged in a service of mercy but are beginning a strange ministry of pouring out bowls of wrath on a Christ-rejecting world. A world that has rejected the blood of Christ must bear the judgment for sin. This judgment is not the result of man's or Satan's enmity. It is the direct action of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen the gentle Jesus, and now we see the wrath of the Lamb. You never think of a little lamb as being angry. A lion can roar, but not a little lamb. The wrath of the Lamb is going to startle the world someday.

The prophets of the Old Testament used the figure of the cup of iniquity and wrath filling up and spoke of God's patience in waiting for it to fill. Then, when it is full, God moves in judgment.

These seven angels with seven golden bowls make it clear that the judgments of the bowls proceed from God and are not the result of man's mistakes or of Satan's enmity. These judgments are the direct action of God.

Chapter 16

THEME: Pouring out the seven bowls

The seven angels pouring out the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth is the theme of this chapter. Also, it includes the interlude between the sixth and seventh bowls. Chapter 15 was the prelude to this chapter and is organically connected with it.

It is worth repeating that the bowls of wrath contain the direct judgment of God upon the world; they do not proceed from either man's misdoings or Satan's machinations. They are poured out during the reign of the Beast. They cover a very brief period of time, comparatively speaking.

There is a definite similarity between the judgments in this chapter and God's judgments upon Egypt through Moses.

Preparation For Final Judgment Of The Great Tribulation (16:1)

The first verse of this chapter speaks of the message the great voice gives the seven angels.

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth [[Rev. 16:1](#)].

As usual, I'll give the literal translation of the Greek text throughout this chapter.

And I heard a great voice out of the sanctuary (temple) saying to the seven angels, Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

Let me remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ is still in full charge. Remember that way back in chapter 5 the Lord Jesus was the only One found worthy to open the seven-sealed book, and His opening of the seals ushered in this entire series of sevens. He is in command to the end of this book. He is the One who is marching to victory. The power and the glory and the majesty belong to Him. This is His judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world. The Father has committed all judgment unto Him. Christ is the One who gives the command that sends out these seven angels with the final judgments. There is no longer a delay, no longer an interval or intermission. The hour has come. The order is given, and the seven angels execute the command.

It is difficult for man, even Christians, to believe that God is going to pour out His wrath on a rebellious and God-hating world and destroy this civilization. But, my friend, everything you see today is under the judgment of God.

When Mrs. McGee and I first came to Southern California, we almost thought that we had entered the Millennium. Those were the good old days before the great population came, before we had smog and heavy traffic. I still love California, but it is not like it was then. Every Monday we would take the day off and go to see some of the sights. We would drive to the beach, to the mountains, or to the desert. One evening as we were driving down Wilshire Boulevard, a very attractive street, all around us we could see liquor signs and the world of glamour designed to satiate the demands of the flesh. I was reminded of what the Lord Jesus said to the apostles when they came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple, how beautiful they were. He said to them, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" ([Matt. 24:2](#)). They were amazed that He would make a statement like that. And I said to my wife, "All of this beauty and glamour that we are seeing is going to pass away. It is under the judgment of God. It all is going up in smoke someday." Believe me, we need to make our investments in heaven where neither

moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Perhaps you are saying, "But I have gilt-edged investments and bonds in a safety deposit box." Yes, but you are still going to lose them because you are going to leave them. You are going to release your hand in death. You are going to turn them loose and move out.

This world in which we are living is under the judgment of God. It is hard for even believers to accept that fact. After almost a century of insipid preaching from America's pulpits, the average man believes that God is all sweetness and light and would not discipline or punish anyone. Well, this Book of Revelation tells a different story!

Pouring Out Of The First Bowl (16:2)

And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image [[Rev. 16:2](#)].

And the first went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became (there broke out) a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the wild beast, and that worshipped his image.

Vincent writes in his Word Studies in the New Testament, "Each angel, as his turn comes, withdraws from the heavenly scene." In other words, the angel leaves the place of the mercy seat in heaven and executes judgment. He leaves heaven and pours a judgment bowl of wrath upon the earth.

The first bowl of judgment is quite interesting. It looks as though God is engaged in germ warfare upon the followers of Antichrist. Scripture states that the life of the flesh is in the blood, and also death is in the blood. These putrifying sores are worse than leprosy or cancer. As man discovers a remedy for one disease, another that is more frightful appears. These are judgments of God by which He reveals physically what man is morally -- utterly corrupt.

The first bowl of wrath compares to the sixth plague in Egypt and is the same type of sore or "boil" (see [Exod. 9:8-12](#)). It is interesting to note that Moses predicted coming judgment upon Israel similar to this. It has not as yet been fulfilled. This prediction is found in the Book of Deuteronomy: "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee" ([Deut. 28:15](#)). Now here is a list of them: "The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed" ([Deut. 28:27](#)). These diseases are incurable, according to [Deuteronomy 28:35](#): "The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head." These are predictions of Moses.

Now here in the Book of Revelation, the "noisome and grievous sore" is for those who received the mark of the Beast. As we have already seen, those who did not receive the mark have been in a bad way also. They have not been able to buy or sell. If a man has a starving family, I'm not going to blame him for breaking into a market to get food for

them. It has been a desperate time for those who have refused the mark. But now, at the end of the Great Tribulation, those who have the mark and have enjoyed all the privileges it brought are going to be judged by God.

May I add a personal comment here: I have always felt that my first bout with cancer was a judgment from God. I still feel the same way today. The fact that God healed me is a sign that He forgave me, and He has given me my greatest ministry since then. I am rejoicing in that. But during the Great Tribulation, God's judgment of this terrible sore -- which is probably worse than cancer -- does not cause men to turn to God.

Pouring Out Of The Second Bowl (16:3)

And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea [[Rev. 16:3](#)].

This plague is more severe than that of the second trumpet, where only one-third of the sea became blood. Here it is the total sea, and the blood is that of a dead man!

Blood is the token of life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood . . ." ([Lev. 17:11](#)). The sea is a great reservoir of life. It is teeming with life, and the salty water is a cathartic for the filth of the earth. However, in this plague, blood is the token of death; the sea becomes a grave of death instead of a womb of life. The cool sea breezes become a stench from the carcasses floating on the surface of the bloody water and lining the shore. Commerce is paralyzed. Human beings died like flies. The first plague in Egypt was the turning of the waters of the Nile River into blood (see [Exod. 7:20-25](#)). There is a striking similarity here.

I wonder if we realize how much we are dependent upon God today? The light company, the gas company, the water company send us bills, but where did they get the light, the gas, and the water? It is obvious that these companies have something to do with getting these things to us, but God was the One who created the light and the gas and the water. Has God ever sent you a bill for the sunshine, for the water you drink, and the air you breathe? Have you paid Him? He has not sent His bill, and you would not be able to pay it if He did. God, who has been so gracious to a Christ-rejecting world, will at last judge all the earth. The angels pour out the bowls in the day of God's wrath.

Pouring Out Of The Third Bowl (16:4-7)

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments [[Rev. 16:4-7](#)].

And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters and it became (there came) blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who wast, The Holy One, because thou didst judge these things. For they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and blood didst thou give them to drink; they are worthy. And I heard the altar saying, Yea, the Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

This plague, similar to that of the third trumpet, again is more severe. There, only one-third of the fresh water was affected, and here the total water supply of the earth will be cut off. This means destruction of human life on an unparalleled plane.

"The angel of the waters" is the superintendent of God's water department here on earth. This reveals another ministry of angels as it affects creation. They are in charge of the different physical departments of the universe. We have seen four angels who control the winds. This angel, who knows the whole story, now declares that God is right and holy in this act of judgment.

My friend, whatever God does is righteous and holy. If you don't agree with Him, it is too bad. You are wrong, not God. Imagine a little man standing up and saying, concerning the Creator, "I don't think He is doing right." I have a question for the person who would make a statement like that: "What are you going to do about it? In fact, what can you do about it?" If you are not in agreement with God, you had better get in agreement with Him. God is righteous in everything He does.

"They shed the blood of saints and prophets, and blood didst thou give them to drink." This is poetic justice with a vengeance. Those who take the sword will perish by the sword, and the shedding of blood leads to the shedding of blood. These who are being judged had made martyrs of God's people, and now God is forcing them to drink blood for the righteous blood they spilled.

"The altar saying" evidently refers back to the saints under the altar who had been praying for justice to be done: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" ([Rev. 6:9-11](#)). Here their prayer is answered. God was a long time getting to it, but now the time is come for answering their prayer.

Pouring Out Of The Fourth Bowl (16:8-9)

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory [[Rev. 16:8-9](#)].

Our Lord predicted signs in the sun during the Great Tribulation: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" ([Luke 21:25](#)).

The Old Testament had a great deal to say about judgment during the Great Tribulation period due to the excessive heat of the sun: "They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust" ([Deut. 32:24](#)).

Also the prophet Isaiah speaks of this: "Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" ([Isa. 24:6](#)). Also -- "Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart" ([Isa. 42:25](#)).

Back in the prophecy of Malachi we are told: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" ([Mal. 4:1](#)).

To accomplish this, all that the Lord would have to do is to remove one or two blankets of atmosphere. Or He would need only to pull the earth a little closer to the sun -- not much -- and we would not be able to survive. It is this frightful period that Isaiah had in view when he wrote that the earth would be decimated. And our Lord said, ". . . Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ." ([Matt. 24:22](#)).

Nevertheless, His own are preserved; "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night" ([Ps. 121:6](#)). Though this promise is quite meaningless to us today, it will be a great comfort to the believer during the Great Tribulation.

"And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God." In spite of all of this, instead of turning to God for mercy, they blaspheme His name. This reveals that the human heart is incurably wicked. No amount of punishment will purify it and change it. By the same token, the Great Tribulation is not for the purification of the church. Nowhere is it stated that the saints are being purified by the Great Tribulation. Rather, it is a judgment upon the earth.

Pouring Out Of The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11)

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast;
and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their
tongues for pain,

And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and
their sores, and repented not of their deeds [[Rev. 16:10-11](#)].

And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the wild beast; and his kingdom was darkened, and they chewed their tongues from their pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

"The throne of the wild beast" makes it clear that the first Beast of chapter 13 is a man. He also represents a kingdom, as you cannot have a king without a kingdom.

"His kingdom was darkened" indicates a strange darkness which might be called black light. We are familiar with that in our day. It will be a frightening thing. As the sun's wattage is increased, it grows darker instead of lighter. The heat will be greater, but the light will be less. Note the similarity to the darkness of Egypt during the ninth plague ([Exod. 10:21-22](#)).

The Old Testament prophets had a great deal to say about this coming darkness: "For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" ([Isa. 60:2](#)). "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. . . . The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come" ([Joel 2:1-2, 31](#)).

In addition to these two prophets, Nahum mentions it. Amos mentions it, and Zephaniah mentions it. Now the apostle John is merely saying, "This Great Tribulation period is where these prophecies fit into the program of God." And our Lord Himself confirmed it when He said, "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light" ([Mark 13:24](#)).

"They chewed their tongues from their pain." Just think of the intensity of the suffering that is caused by these bowl judgments! But they don't turn men from their wickedness.

There are two self-evident facts at this point: (1) God is righteous in pouring out the bowls of wrath. Let's remember that. Jesus is the judge. He is in charge of handing out the punishment. (2) Yet mankind is not led to repentance through this suffering. The apostle Paul predicted this: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" ([Rom. 2:4-5](#)). And here it is -- the righteous judgment of God. And man continues to harden his heart and refuses to repent.

Pouring Out Of The Sixth Bowl (16:12)

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared [[Rev. 16:12](#)].

And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising.

The Euphrates is called "the great river" in the Bible just as the Mediterranean Sea is called "the great sea." The prominence of the Euphrates River in the Word of God should not be overlooked. First mentioned in [Genesis 2](#), it is designated over twenty-five times in the Bible. In the verse before us it is seen in connection with the sixth plague. As it was prominent in the first state of man on the earth, so it is featured in his last state -- that of the Great Tribulation. It was the cradle of man's civilization and obviously will be the grave of man's civilization. It was a border between East and West, eighteen hundred miles long, over half of it navigable. It was wide and deep, which made it difficult for an army to pass over it.

Abraham was called a Hebrew, and some interpret that as meaning he came from the other side of the Euphrates. The Euphrates was the eastern border of the land God promised to Abraham. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" ([Gen. 15:18](#)). It also became the eastern border of the Roman Empire.

The Euphrates River will be miraculously dried up, thus erasing the border between East and West, so that the kings of the sunrising might come to the Battle of Armageddon. In the past Tamerlane came out of the East and swept across those plains with a tremendous horde, and Genghis Khan did the same thing. Those were just little previews of what is going to happen in the last days. After the Euphrates River is gone, the great hordes in the East that have never moved West will come in a great crusade to Palestine. The bulk of the world population is in the East, and having only a smattering of the gospel, they will choose Antichrist. The picture is frightful. Can anyone doubt, with the hundreds of millions pouring into Palestine, that the blood will be as deep as the horses' bridles?

Interlude: Kings Of Inhabited Earth Proceed To Har-magedon (16:13-16)

Now between the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath is this interlude. (As I have pointed out, there is interlude, an hiatus, between the sixth and seventh features of each series of seven -- with the exception of the seven performers.) It is a break for the filling in of details.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty [[Rev. 16:13-14](#)].

And I saw (coming) out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the wild beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, as it were frogs. For they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth upon the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of the God, the Almighty.

This is Armageddon (more correctly spelled Har-Magedon). It is not to be a single battle but a war, the War of Armageddon.

It will be triggered, I believe, by the coming down of Russia from the north sometime around the middle of the Tribulation period. The campaign extends the length of Palestine to the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the mountains of Edom. It will continue for approximately three and one-half years. It will be concluded by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to establish His Kingdom. The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings.

Here we are introduced to the trinity of hell -- Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet. They act in unison in forcing the nations of the world to march against Israel in an attempt to destroy God's purposes on earth. God gave certain promises to Abraham and to those who would come after him. He made certain covenants with the Hebrew people, and those covenants are going to stand, just like [John 3:16](#) stands for believers today.

I want to say carefully and kindly that there is a system of theology abroad today that passes as conservative, but it takes the position that God is through with the nation Israel, that all of God's covenants with Israel are negated, that God does not intend to make good any of His promises to Israel -- yet there are literally hundreds of them in the Old Testament. This theological system simply spiritualizes these promises, and the proponents do so with no scriptural grounds whatsoever. Origen, one of the early church fathers who came from North Africa, started this method of spiritualizing instead of literalizing the Scriptures. We need to remember that the Bible is a literal book. It is the purpose of Satan to destroy God's covenants with Israel, and that is the reason Satan moves in and brings the whole world against this little nation. This will happen during the Great Tribulation.

As the study of prophecy develops, it is my conviction that this spiritualization of prophecy, although presently accepted by a great many expositors, will become a heresy in the church. I may not be around to see it, but just remember that McGee said it would happen.

Now let's look at the tremendous scene before us.

"As it were frogs." The question is: Will they be literal frogs? Well, they were literal in Egypt, and they could be literal in this case, but I am willing to accept them as a symbol. Perhaps you are saying, "Wait a minute, McGee, I thought you didn't accept a symbol unless it was clearly a symbol." Yes, that is right, and notice that John says, "as it were frogs"; he doesn't say they were frogs. It seems to me that John is always very careful to give us an accurate picture of what he sees.

J. A. Seiss, in his book, *The Apocalypse*, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, comments on the frogs in a vivid manner:

They are spirits; they are "unclean spirits;" they are "demon spirits;" they are sent forth into activity by the Dragon Trinity; they are the elect agents to awaken the world to the attempt to abolish God from the earth; and they are frog-like in that they come forth out of the pestiferous quagmires of the universe, do their work amid the world's evening shadows, and creep, and croak, and fill the ears of the nations with their noisy demonstrations, till they set all the kings and armies of the whole earth in enthusiastic commotion for the final crushing out of the Lamb and all His powers. As in chapter 9, the

seven Spirits of God and of Christ went forth into all the earth to make up and gather together into one holy fellowship the great congregation of the sanctified: so these spirits of hell go forth upon the kings and potentates of the world, to make up and gather together the grand army of the Devil's worshippers.

In our own day we have seen that the news media can become a propaganda agent to carry out the purposes of men who are in the background. The news media can brainwash the public. This is exactly what the trinity of evil will do. They will brainwash the nations of the world into marching against Israel.

The Lord Jesus is the only One who can stop this. Israel's help does not come from the North or the South or the East or the West -- that's where their trouble is coming from. Their help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame [[Rev. 16:15](#)].

"Behold, I come as a thief." Christ will never come as a thief to the church: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" ([1Thess. 5:4](#), italics mine). A thief is someone you shut out; you don't welcome him. You don't put a note on the door when you leave your house which says, "Mr. Thief, I left the back door open for you. The silver is on the third shelf; help yourself." You never welcome a thief. You lock him out. Christ does not come as a thief to His church which is looking for Him. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" ([Titus 2:13](#)).

The Lord Jesus Christ does come as a thief to the world at the end of the Great Tribulation, as the verse before us indicates. As we saw at the beginning of the Revelation, the whole earth will mourn because of Him. They don't want Him to come. They would like to shut Him out from ever returning to the earth.

"Blessed is he that . . . keepeth his garments." What garments are these? Edersheim sheds light on this phrase by explaining that the captain of the temple made his rounds during the night to see if the guards were awake and alert. If one was found asleep, he was either beaten or his garments set on fire. I suppose it could be paraphrased, "Don't lost your shirt. Be sure that you are clothed with the righteousness of Christ."

And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon [[Rev. 16:16](#)].

This is the only occurrence of the word Armageddon in Scripture, although there are many references to it. It means "Mount of Megiddo." It is a compound word made up of the Hebrew words Har, meaning "mountain," and Megiddo, which is a mount in the plain of Esdraelon. I have been there several times. It is one of the most fertile valleys I have ever seen. I guess it is the most fertile valley in the world today. It is a place where many battles have been fought in the past. Vincent cites Clarke's Travels regarding Megiddo in the plain of Esdraelon:

. . . Which has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in Palestine from the days of Nabuchodonozor king of Assyria, unto the disastrous march of Napoleon Bonaparte from Egypt into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Christian crusaders, and anti-Christian Frenchmen; Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks, and Arabs, warriors of every nation that is under heaven, have pitched their tents on the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the banners of their nation wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon.

"He gathered them together." The "he" is possibly God Himself. Although Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet act in unison to force the nations of the world to march against Israel, they nevertheless fulfill the Word of God.

Pouring Out Of The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21)

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great [[Rev. 16:17-18](#)].

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and a great voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were lightnings, and voices and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty.

"The seventh poured out his bowl upon the air." This is the last series of seven judgments before the coming of Christ, and this is the seventh and last of the last seven. In other words, we are right at the end of the Great Tribulation here. At this point the only One who could deliver these people and set up a righteous kingdom on earth and bring peace to the world is the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep our eyes on Christ through this. He is the judge now.

"Upon the air" means in space, with no specific geographical location. The Lord Jesus Christ controls space. He is getting ready to come through space.

"The temple" has been mentioned again and again and again. It has been mentioned with the bowls of wrath, the trumpets, and the seals; in fact, it has been mentioned with each series of judgments. However, the temple has been mentioned with the bowls of wrath six times -- more than with all the other judgments combined -- and this is the last reference to it. There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, so this obviously has no reference to the church. Whether we like it or not, Israel will go through the Great Tribulation period. We know that the remnant, all 144,000 of them, will make it through; that is, they will be faithful until death. And I do not know how many more there will be. We do know that a great company of Gentiles were sealed and that they are going to make it through the Great Tribulation also.

Again let me repeat that the church is not a part of this scene. The church is not going through the Time of Jacob's Trouble. God has two ways of saving people in the Great Tribulation period: first, saving them out of it by taking them out of the world, as He took Enoch before the judgment of the Flood; second, by saving them in it, as He preserved

the life of Noah during the Flood. God will definitely save people during the days of the Great Tribulation, but the church will not be a part of that, for it will have been taken from the earth before the Tribulation begins.

"A great voice came out of the temple, from the throne." That voice is not identified for us, but I personally believe that it is the voice of none other than the Son of God. His message is recorded: "It is done." This is the second time we have heard Him say this. When He was hanging upon the cross, He said, "It is finished" -- in Greek it is one word: Tetelestai, "It is done." At that point in history redemption was wrought and salvation was finished for man. There is nothing man can contribute to his salvation; he must simply receive it by faith. You can have a finished redemption; but if you won't accept it, there will be a judgment. For those who have refused God's salvation, there is nothing they can do to escape the judgment of God. It is done. No wonder the writer to the Hebrews wrote: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" ([Heb. 2:3](#)). Christ is the judge, and the judgment of the Great Tribulation is now concluded. "It is done" is His announcement, and there is nothing ahead but judgment, the Great White Throne judgment.

Lightnings, voices, and thunders were the solemn announcement in the beginning of the Great Tribulation that judgment was impending. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" ([Rev. 4:5](#)). Now again at the conclusion of the Tribulation are voices and thunders and lightnings.

"There was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth." The Word of God makes it very clear that here at the end of the Great Tribulation period there is to be a horrendous earthquake which probably will shake the entire world.

And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great [[Rev. 16:19-21](#)].

And the great city became (divided) into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the indignation of His wrath. And every island fled away, and mountains were not found. And great hail, as it were a talent weight, comes down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plagues of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

This concludes the Great Tribulation period. There is a great earthquake, and it divides the "great city," which is Jerusalem. The earthquake divides this city into three parts. Although the center of the earthquake is in Jerusalem, it is not confined to Jerusalem,

because we are told that "the cities of the nations fell." This tells us something of the extent and the vast destruction of the earthquake.

"Babylon" is mentioned specifically again. It was mentioned in chapter 14, [verse 8](#), which says, "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The next two chapters give us the details concerning Babylon.

"Every island fled away" reveals that even the islands are shifted from one place to another by the earthquake.

The final act of judgment is the hailstorm. The size of the hailstones is enormous -- "a talent weight." The Greek talent was fifty-six pounds, and the Jewish talent was one hundred fourteen pounds. In Texas I can remember seeing hailstones as big as baseballs, but this beats the Texas story altogether. A very interesting hailstorm is recorded during the time of Joshua: "And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" ([Josh. 10:11](#)).

According to the historian Josephus, the Roman catapults threw stones the weight of a talent, into Jerusalem in B.C. 70 when Titus leveled the city.

The marvelous hailstorm ends the Great Tribulation period.

Chapter 17

THEME: The apostate church in the Great Tribulation

In chapters 17 -- 18 we see the judgment of the two Babylons. We will first see the apostate church in the Great Tribulation in chapter 17, and then we will see not only religious Babylon but also commercial Babylon in chapter 18.

So many great issues are brought to a crisis in the Great Tribulation that it is difficult to keep them separated, and many fine expositors disagree on details. We have already noted this as we have gone through this Book of Revelation. Although we agree with the system of interpretation, we do disagree on details.

This fact should not be disturbing to believers, as many details will not be clarified until the world enters the Great Tribulation period and actually faces the climax to each crisis.

This is especially evident relative to the two Babylons in chapters 17 -- 18. The questions are: "Are there two Babylons, and are they in two different geographical locations? Are they representative of two systems? Are they two literal cities, or are they the same?" The answers to these questions will become more apparent as our redemption draws near. It appears at the present time, in my judgment, that two distinct cities are in view.

Here in chapter 17 it is mystery Babylon, the cosmic church, the apostate church. The church of Thyatira, described in chapter 2, [verses 18-29](#), which permitted Jezebel to teach, will become the apostate church of the Great Tribulation. It will attain the goal of

the present-day apostates of all the great systems of the world: Romanism, Protestantism, pagan religions, cults and "isms." Even in our so-called independent Bible churches there will be those who are not believers, and during the Tribulation they will join this great organization that may call itself a church but is not. The Bible calls it a harlot. There couldn't be a worse label than that! This is ecumenical ecclesiasticism of the one-world church. The location of this system could be in Rome. Rome, the city built on seven hills, is probably the city in mind here. However, Geneva, where the World Council of Churches has its headquarters, is also included, and other places, such as Los Angeles -- if I know Los Angeles, and I think I do -- can also make a healthy contribution to it!

It is called mystery Babylon because of its origin. At the Tower of Babel man attempted to rally against God. Under Nimrod, Babylon became the origin of all false religion. Now the dream of Nimrod will be realized in the first half of the Great Tribulation period, for the cosmic church dominates the wild Beast. The church that should have been the bride of Christ is a harlot here. This church is guilty of spiritual fornication, selling herself to the world for hire. This is the church that says, "I am rich and increased with goods, and I have need of nothing."

Looking back at the study of the seven churches, in chapters 3 -- 4 of the Book of Revelation, I pointed out that the church in Philadelphia represented the church that would be raptured before the time of the Tribulation period. He said to that church, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" ([Rev. 3:10](#)). That "hour" is the Great Tribulation, and we have been in that "hour" a long time in our study of this Book of Revelation.

The true church will not go through the Great Tribulation; it will be raptured before the Tribulation begins. Let's be specific: who will be raptured? Not certain denominations and not just individual churches, but His church, a collective term meaning all true believers, those who are in Christ. That is the group that will be taken out at the Rapture, and the rest of the church members will be left here on this earth to go through the Great Tribulation. As Dr. George Gill used to say, some churches will meet the Sunday after the Rapture and will not miss a member. But let's clearly understand that they are not true believers. They are not part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He never calls them His church; He calls it a harlot! It is a pseudo-religious system, which controls the wild Beast during the first half of the Great Tribulation, yet it is hated by him. During the last half of the Tribulation, the Beast destroys the harlot in order to set up his own religion. J. Dwight Pentecost in his book, *Things To Come* (p. 368), gives this comment concerning the harlot system:

The Beast, who was dominated by the harlot system ([Rev. 17:3](#)), rises against her and destroys her and her system completely. Without doubt the harlot system was in competition with the religious worship of the Beast, promoted by the False Prophet, and her destruction is brought about so that the Beast may be the sole object of false worship as he claims to be God.

Babylon is to be rebuilt, as we have seen in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and here in chapters 17 - 18 we see it destroyed. Ecclesiastical Babylon will be destroyed by the wild Beast.

Ecclesiastical Babylon is destroyed by the wild Beast.

Commercial Babylon is destroyed by the return of Christ.

Ecclesiastical Babylon is hated by the Beast.

Commercial Babylon is loved by the world.

Ecclesiastical Babylon is destroyed at the beginning of the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation.

Commercial Babylon is destroyed at the end of the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation -- that is, at the very end. [Zechariah 5:5-11](#) also has something interesting to say in this connection.

Great Harlot Riding The Wild Beast (17:1-18)

I do not have words to describe how frightful this picture is. The harlot is the false church, as we have said, And the wild Beast is the restored Roman Empire, which will be brought back together by Antichrist with the assistance, I believe, of the false church.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication [[Rev. 17:1-2](#)].

As usual, I'll give my own literal translation of the Greek text throughout the chapter.

And there came one of the (7) seven angels that had the (7) seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.

"The great harlot" is that part of the church that will remain after the true church has been raptured. It will be composed of those who have never trusted Christ as Savior; they have never been in the body of Christ. This is the group that enters the Great Tribulation.

We are told certain things about her. She "sitteth upon many waters." According to [verse 15](#), which we will see later, the "waters" refer to great masses of people and nations. The harlot will pretty much control the world.

"The kings of the earth committed fornication" show that there is an unholy alliance between church and state during that period.

My friend, the movement in our day of bringing all religions together certainly falls into the pattern of this false church which is to appear -- and Scripture doesn't even dignify it by the name of church, although I am sure it will call itself that. I believe that this movement is more dangerous to our own country than is any foreign political system and that it is more dangerous than the so-called new morality. I believe that it is more dangerous than any other movement. It will become a power-bloc that will dazzle the

unthinking mob. It will bring the world under the influence of the wild Beast out of the sea and the wild Beast out of the earth. They will use the apostate church to control the masses, and the church will yield to this arrangement for political preferment and power.

You see, when you reject the genuine, you are wide open for the spurious. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that when someone rejects the love of the truth that they might be saved, they will believe the big lie.

"The judgment of the great harlot." God's cup of judgment will be pressed to the lips of the harlot. And who is going to destroy her? The Beast himself will destroy her. You see, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will not want her around after she has served their purpose. Antichrist wants to be worshiped, and he doesn't want any competition from the church.

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns [[Rev. 17:3](#)].

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

"He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness." Remember that John was on the Isle of Patmos in the Spirit for the vision of the glorified Christ and His message to the churches. At that time John was caught up to heaven. From then on the scene shifts from heaven to earth. However, here we are told again that John was in the Spirit. Did he need a fresh anointing of the Spirit for this vision? I rather think so. Is the wilderness literal? Remember that this chapter is a vision where symbols are used. Around both Babylon and Rome there is a literal wilderness. This is a matter of recorded history. Babylon was to become a wilderness, and in this connection read [Isaiah 47](#) -- [Isaiah 48](#) and [Jeremiah 50](#) -- [Jeremiah 51](#). Outside of Rome the wilderness is called the campagna. I believe that the wilderness mentioned in this verse is literal but also that it is a sign of the chaotic condition of the world brought about by the religious confusion of Babylon.

John saw a woman "sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast." This is a frightful and frightening scene. The wild Beast has previously been identified as the Antichrist ruling over the restored Roman Empire. The woman is identified for us in [verse 18](#): "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." The woman is a city, and the city is Rome, the religious capital of the world. She is religious Rome, which at that time will have inherited all the religions of the world. You see, all true believers will have left the world scene at the time of the Rapture. This includes all true believers, and I have discovered that there are many true believers in Romanism and in liberal churches and even in some very weird religious systems. All genuine believers, regardless of where they have gone to church, will be raptured. This will leave a church on earth that is totally apostate. Rather than being "the bride of Christ," God calls it a harlot.

The city is further identified in [verse 9](#): "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." Rome was the city set on seven hills and was known as such to both pagan and Christian writers. Horace wrote,

"The gods, who look with favour on the seven hills. . . ." Ovid added, "But Rome looks around on the whole globe from her seven mountains, the seat of empire and abode of the gods." Augustine wrote, "Babylon is a former Rome, and Rome is a later Babylon." In these verses the city of Rome is assuredly in view. The woman, the harlot, represents a religious system that will be revealed during the first part of the Great Tribulation period after the true church has been removed from the earth. And this religious system, as the symbol given to us indicates, dominates and rides the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Great Tribulation period.

"Full of names of blasphemy" reveals how far religion will have departed from the living Christ.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH [[Rev. 17:4-5](#)].

And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold, and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

"Clothed in purple and scarlet." Purple was the predominant color of Roman imperialism. Every senator and consul wore a purple stripe as a badge of his position, and the emperor's robes were purple. Scarlet is the color adopted by Roman Catholicism.

"Gilded with gold" shows the beauty of the outward display, but, like the Pharisees, it is within "full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness."

"Precious stones and pearls" are pretty cold, though they may be genuine, and are a sordid imitation of genuine heartfelt religion. The Lord Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" ([Matt. 23:25](#)).

"A golden cup full of abominations" is the religious intoxication of the anti-church (not Antichrist) and a pseudoreligion, counterfeit Christianity, a fake and false gospel, and a sham and spurious system. This is the cup which makes the world drunk. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" ([Jer. 51:7](#)).

"Upon her forehead a name written" is a startling revelation of the character of this woman. She does not wear a crown but rather the mark of her profession. It is of interest to see that Seneca, in addressing a wanton priestess, said, "Thy name hung from thy forehead." "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" is the disgraceful title for the "church" which should belong to Christ as a bride.

Now I know that we live in a day of changing morality, but I am a little old-fashioned, and I still think that the Word of God is right in its values. I think that the finest thing in the world is a woman and that God has made her that way. When she marries, she is brought into a relationship in which she can give to a man that which puts him in orbit. It is my firm conviction that the thing our civilization has done for a woman has not been to liberate her but to enslave her so that she has become more of a sex symbol than ever before. Instead of taking her rightful place where she can lift a man to the heights, she is characterized as the one who pulls him down to the depths. And the lowest picture you can have is that of a harlot. You may not like it, but that is how the Word of God sees it.

"MYSTERY BABYLON." The true church is a mystery in that it was not revealed in the Old Testament (see [Eph. 3:1-9](#)). The anti-church, designated here as a harlot, is a mystery in that it was not revealed until John wrote [Revelation 17](#). Let me say again that when the true church left the earth at the time of the Rapture, the phonies, those who were only church members, entered the Great Tribulation period, and the system continued -- not now a church, but a harlot. Paul had written of the mystery of iniquity: "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now hinders will hinder until he be taken out of the way" ([2Thess. 2:7](#)). The anti-church is the antithesis of the true church, which is the virgin bride of Christ, and it is the consummation of the working of "the mystery of iniquity." It is "MYSTERY BABYLON" because it is given this designation just as Jerusalem is called Sodom.

Babylon is the fountainhead for all false religion; therefore she is "THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." This is, by far, Scripture's more expressive and vivid picture of awful and abominable sin. Sex and false religions are related, you may be sure of that. I believe that many young people are really missing it in marriage when they do not stand at the marriage altar in the presence of God presenting themselves to each other, having kept their bodies for the marriage. That was God's ideal and still is.

Have you noticed that this "MYSTERY BABYLON" is called the "MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS"? The mother of harlots -- not singular but plural. In our day the ecumenical church has faced a lot of problems. It seems that they have recognized psychological differences in people and that it is impossible to water down theologies and practices to suit everyone. So each group will come into this great world ecumenical system but retain some of its peculiarities. For example, those who want to immerse will immerse. Those who want to sprinkle will sprinkle. Those who want elaborate ritual will have it, and those who want no ritual will have that. You see, there is going to be more than the mother harlot -- there will be a whole lot of harlots, a regular brothel.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns [[Rev. 17:6-7](#)].

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the wild beast that is carrying her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

"Drunken with the blood of the saints." The harlot not only makes others drunk, but she is intoxicated by her acts of persecution. While it is true that the church will not go through the Great Tribulation, as we near the end of this age of grace, believers can expect some tribulation. It is my experience and that of other Christian leaders that today it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand for the Word of God and for the things of Christ.

"The saints" probably refers to Old Testament saints, and "the martyrs of Jesus" refers to New Testament saints. This indicates that "BABYLON" is more than just Romanism. Rather, it is an amalgam of all religions. All true believers were caught up at the Rapture, and Babylon is the residue of what is left.

Babylon is a composite religious system which includes Protestantism, Romanism, cults - the whole lot which was not raptured, you see. It is confusion compounded and is the fountainhead of all religious error and idolatry. Babylon in the Old Testament persecuted God's people and was the enemy of God. It was Babylon that put the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace because they would not worship an image.

When John saw the vision of the woman, he says that he "wondered with a great wonder." This is the first time that John has had his mind boggled. We have had our minds boggled before, but this really throws John. The angel asks why he should wonder when he (the angel) was present to explain the mystery of the woman.

The emphasis here is on the Roman Empire aspect of the wild beast rather than on the Antichrist aspect. We should note that.

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space [[Rev. 17:8-10](#)].

The wild beast which thou sawest was and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go (goeth) into perdition. And those dwelling on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written upon the book of life from the foundation of the world (cosmos), when they behold the wild beast because it was, and is not, and shall come (be present). Here is the mind having wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings; the five have fallen (fell), the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.

The wild beast "was" speaks of the past history of the Roman Empire. "Is not" refers to the present condition of the fragmented Empire. The Roman Empire is not dead. It has fallen apart into the nations of Europe today. "Is about to come up out of the abyss" speaks of the reactivation of the Roman Empire by Satan.

As I have indicated before, many have attempted to put the Roman Empire back together again but have never been successful. Charlemagne tried it, Napoleon tried it, Hitler tried it, Mussolini tried it, and at the time I am writing this, the United Nations is trying it, but they, too, are failing. The wild Beast, who is the Antichrist, will be the one who puts the Roman Empire back together again.

"Shall . . . go into perdition" speaks of the destruction of the Roman Empire by the coming of Christ. The reappearance of the Roman Empire in its great power will win the admiration of the peoples of the world who are not redeemed. They will respect and worship the Antichrist for his brilliant coup d'etat. God's saints will have the mind of the Spirit and will understand and not be spiritually stupid: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" ([1John 2:20, 27](#)).

"And there are seven kings" is taken by some (including Newell and Govett, who are excellent commentators on Revelation) to mean individual rulers. Govett gives the following list:

1. Julius Caesar -- assassinated
2. Tiberius -- poisoned or smothered
3. Caligula -- assassinated
4. Claudius -- poisoned
5. Nero -- committed suicide

"The one is" refers to Domitian who was living in John's day, who was also assassinated.

"The other is not yet come" refers to the Antichrist. Other expositors (as Scofield and Walter Scott) consider these seven as the different forms of government through which Rome passed. These are listed as kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes. "The one is" refers to the sixth or imperial form of government set up by Julius Caesar and under which John was banished by Domitian. The seventh and last, though it has not yet appeared, will be satanic in form.

Regardless of the interpretation adopted, the end in view is the same -- the Antichrist rules over the reactivated Roman Empire.

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful [[Rev. 17:11-14](#)].

And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven, and is going into perdition. And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who (of the kind which) have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the wild beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give (over) their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and those with Him (shall overcome), called and chosen and faithful.

At times the wild beast signifies, generally, the Roman Empire, but also it signifies the last or eighth head; that is, the individual emperor who is Antichrist. Now here the Antichrist is designated. He is the "little horn" in the vision that God gave to the prophet Daniel. The "little horn" puts down three other horns -- that is, three kings -- when he comes to power. "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. . . . And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings" ([Dan. 7:8, 24](#)). In my book, *Delving Through Daniel*, I go into detail on this "little horn."

"The beast that was" refers to the past history of the Roman Empire under the emperors.

"And is not" refers to the end of Imperial Rome with its global empire, which came to an end sometime between the third and fifth centuries.

"Is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven" identifies the Antichrist with the return to the imperial form of the restored Roman Empire. He is the "little horn" of Daniel, chapter 7. He is not one of the ten horns, but he is separate from them. He is an eighth head in this seven, yet he is one of the seven since he restores the last form of government to Rome. Now that will confuse you, I know, but that is exactly what is being said here in Revelation.

"The ten horns" are the same as the ten horns of [Daniel 7:7](#). These ten kings will reign with the Antichrist but will be subservient to him. They willingly or unwillingly give over their authority to the Antichrist and become his puppets.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth [[Rev. 17:15-18](#)].

And he saith to me, The waters which thou sawest where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes (mobs), and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolated and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her (down) with fire. For God did put into their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which hath a kingdom over the kings of the earth.

"The waters" are explained to be the many ethnological groups as well as the nations of the world. This figure is in harmony with that used in the Old Testament. You can check that out with [Isaiah 8:7](#) and [Psalm 18](#). The position of the harlot reveals that she is ruling over them for only a brief time.

"The ten horns" are ten kings (as told us in [verse 12](#)) who rule over the different divisions of the Roman Empire. They in turn give over to the Beast their kingdoms. This solidifies the Roman Empire and enables the Beast to lift himself up as a world dictator.

For a time the Beast (Antichrist) is willing to share his place of exaltation with the harlot, since she has also sought to advance his cause while dividing his glory. This he hates, and the ten kings are one with him in this. The Antichrist not only breaks his covenant with Israel, but he also breaks his relationship with the apostate church. This hatred against the apostate church is so violent that the reaction is described as the cannibalistic picking of her bones, then burning them with fire! This great hatred destroys the false church. This is what happens to the false church. It has no victory. It never comes into the presence of Christ. It is not raptured. Finally it is destroyed by the Antichrist.

In doing this the Antichrist and his ten allies are fulfilling the Word of God and carrying out His will as did the Assyrian (as predicted in [Isaiah 10:5-19](#)) and just as surely as Caesar Augustus did when he signed the tax bill that moved Mary and Joseph down to Bethlehem so Scripture could be fulfilled.

By eliminating the apostate church, the way is cleared for the worship of Antichrist, as advocated by the False Prophet.

"The woman" is a religious system, as we have seen. Also, I believe she is further identified as a city, the city of Rome.

This is the frightful but just end of the apostate church. However, it does not improve the situation. Rather it introduces the darkest period for religion in the history of the world. The reign and religion of Antichrist is the darkest hour earth will know, and yet it is the inevitable end of the distrust which began in the Garden of Eden when man failed to believe God. It was given new impetus at the Tower of Babel, which was a rallying place for those against God. And finally it climaxed in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ when man rejected the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Having rejected the truth, the only alternative left for man is to believe the big lie, the strong delusion. History will culminate in the catastrophic coming of Christ to this earth, as we shall see in chapter 19. This is the just retribution of error and evil.

My friend, you as a Christian should have thankfulness in your heart, knowing you will be spared from the Great Tribulation, but also you should have a real concern for your loved ones who may be facing this frightful period that lies ahead.

Chapter 18

THEME: Political and commercial Babylon judged

In the chapter before us we see the judgment of commercial Babylon and the reaction of both earth and heaven to it.

In chapters 17 -- 18 two Babylons are brought before us. The Babylon of chapter 17 is ecclesiastical. The Babylon of chapter 18 is economic. The first is religious -- the apostate church which entered the Great Tribulation period. The second is political and commercial. The commercial center is loved by the kings of the earth; and the apostate church is hated by the kings of the earth, as we saw in chapter 17. The apostate church is destroyed by the kings of the earth. When Christ returns, political Babylon will be destroyed by the judgment of God. Obviously, mystery Babylon, the apostate church, is destroyed first in the midst of the Great Tribulation, while commercial Babylon will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ. These two Babylons are not one and the same city. I personally believe that mystery Babylon is Rome and that, when it goes down in the midst of the Great Tribulation, the religious center shifts to Jerusalem because it is at Jerusalem that the False Prophet will put up his image of the Antichrist to be worshiped. Commercial Babylon is ancient Babylon, rebuilt as the commercial capital of the world. This city is the final capital of the political power of the Beast.

A few years ago it seemed rather farfetched that the power could reach back into the Mideast, but since then we have experienced a shortage of energy, and when they cut off the oil supply, the whole world feels it. They wield tremendous power. The wealth of the world is moving into that particular area because of the price of oil. It could well become the great commercial capital of the world. And this great commercial center, which will be Babylon rebuilt, will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ.

Sometime ago a Jew challenged the Israeli minister of tourism by saying, "How does it come about that all the countries surrounding Israel have oil, but Israel doesn't?" His reply was this: "God gave the Arabs oil and the Jews the Bible. Do you want to exchange with them? God forbid. The oil will run out quick enough, but the Bible will last forever."

There had been some disagreement among conservative expositors about whether or not ancient Babylon will be rebuilt. Candidly, for many years I took the position that it would not be rebuilt. However, I believe now that it will be rebuilt. [Isaiah 13:19-22](#) speaks of the fact that ancient Babylon is to be rebuilt and destroyed, and this destruction is what is mentioned in chapter 18 of Revelation, which is before us. Actually, I don't think it could be rebuilt on the same spot because the Euphrates River has moved about fourteen miles from the ancient city.

There are two views of the destruction of Babylon which are diametrically opposed to each other. The viewpoint and perspective are highly important. (1) The reaction of men

of business and politics is one of great anguish. To them it is the depth of tragedy. It means the total bankruptcy of big business. (2) The second reaction is that of heaven. It is one of joy that the holiness and justice of God is vindicated. It means the end of man's sinful career on earth. This will bring to an end the Great Tribulation period.

Announcement And Fall Of Commercial And Political Babylon (18:1-8)

Chapter 18 begins with "another angel" who comes down from heaven with a message.

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory [[Rev. 18:1](#)].

As usual, I'll give my literal translation of the Greek text throughout this chapter.

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

Again we have this very interesting statement, "after these things" (Gr.: meta tauta). After what things? After the series of sevens and after the judgment of religious Babylon come these things. Progress has definitely been made -- through the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven personages, and the seven bowls of wrath -- and we are advancing to the end of the Great Tribulation. In fact, this brings us to the end of the Great Tribulation.

John says, "I saw." He is still a spectator. He saw "another angel," which takes us back to chapter 14 where a series of six angels is mentioned, each with the sole identification of "another angel." This angel is a divine, supernatural messenger of God, but faceless and nameless. He has great authority (power), which indicates that he has a superior rank to the other "another angel," and he is bringing an important message.

"The earth was lightened with his glory" seems to further signify the prestige of this angel (cf. [Ezek. 43:2](#)).

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird [[Rev. 18:2](#)].

And he shouted with a mighty voice, saying, Fell, fell is Babylon the great, and became a habitation of demons, and a prison (hold, cage) of every unclean spirit, and a prison (hold, cage) of every unclean and hated bird.

The preliminary announcement of the fall of Babylon was made in [Revelation 14:8](#): "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The angel here is greater in authority than the one who made that first announcement.

In the words, "Fell, fell is Babylon . . . and became," the tense in the Greek is prophetic aorist which speaks of coming events as if they have already transpired. When God says something is going to happen, you can speak about it as though it had already happened, because it is going to happen. It is just that sure. In God's plan and program it is just as

though it had already taken place because He knows the end from the beginning. Babylon, this great commercial center of the world, is going to be destroyed.

"A habitation of demons, and a cage of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hated bird." This indicates that Babylon is where demons of the spirit world and unclean birds of the physical world will be incarcerated during the Millennium. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah confirm this (see [Isa. 13:19-22](#); [Jer. 50:38-40](#)). These prophecies find a final fulfillment in the destruction of literal Babylon here in [Revelation 18](#). If this is true, there is no prophecy which forbids Babylon from being rebuilt. Babylon is the headquarters of demons and has been the place of rebellion down through the years.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her
fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication
with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through
the abundance of her delicacies [[Rev. 18:3](#)].

For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations have drunk (or are fallen); and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

"Have drunk" (or are fallen) are the two permitted renderings -- both have good manuscript authority. Both are true. The normal rendering is "have drunk." This is God's judgment on big business which denies God's authority. This is the unholy alliance of government and business. We have seen some of this in our day and, frankly, it smells to high heaven.

The word for merchants means "those who travel." It is not those who produce goods or manufacture goods, but those who are brokers, engaging in business for a big profit. Business is a sacred cow that nothing must harm or hinder. This is true today, of course. Man uses business as the biggest excuse for having no time for God, yet these same men must finally stand before God. God will judge godless commercialism. Big business is in for it, I can assure you of that. In fact, it has had a rough time in our day.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her,
my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye
receive not of her plagues [[Rev. 18:4](#)].

And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come forth out of her, my people, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

This verse reveals that God's people are going to be in the world to the very end (it is not speaking of the church which has already been removed before the Great Tribulation began), but God will have His people on earth during the Tribulation. The question has always been: Will they be able to make it through? That is, will they remain faithful to Christ? Yes, they do make it through. Remember that God started with 144,000, and the number that will make it through the Tribulation is 144,000. This is like the parable the Lord Jesus told about the shepherd who started out with one hundred sheep and one of them got away. But he didn't end up with ninety-nine; he ended up with one hundred, because he went out and got that little sheep that was lost.

The One who is speaking in this verse is none other than the Son of God, and He is calling His people out of Babylon before the judgment comes. It is a physical separation with a corollary in the experience of Lot in Sodom. As Lot was warned to get out of Sodom to escape the deluge of fire (see [Gen. 19](#)), so these people of God are warned. God's Word tells us, "When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them" ([Deut. 4:30-31](#)).

Such was also God's warning to Israel in [Jeremiah 51:5-6, 45](#) and in [Isaiah 48:20](#). The warning is twofold: (1) They are to have no fellowship with the sins of Babylon and (2) they are to flee before judgment falls.

I think this has a pertinent application for us today. It should be a warning to us, not that God will fail to save His own from this hour, but that He wants us to be separate, not indulging the old nature, but walking by the Spirit. If we will not deal with sin in our own lives here and now by confessing and forsaking it, He will deal with it. Either He will judge sin now, or it will meet us at the judgment seat of Christ. God gives us the opportunity of judging our sin today: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" ([1Cor. 11:31-32](#)).

How can we judge our own sin? [1John 1:9](#) has the answer: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To "confess" means to say the same thing that God says about it. It means to take God's viewpoint and say, "God, I agree with You. What I did was sin." It is so easy to make excuses for our own sin. We say that ours is not really sin -- of course, if our neighbors do it, it is sin. But until you and I are willing to call our sin sin, we haven't confessed it at all. If we refuse to judge ourselves, we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. The sins of some folk will not be settled until they stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I hope to get all of my accounts straightened out down here. Just because God may not take us to the woodshed immediately does not mean that He is letting us get by without punishment. He doesn't spank the Devil's children, but if you are His child, judgment will come to you.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities [[Rev. 18:5](#)].

Babylon has a long history of accumulated sins, and God has the record. It is one of the oldest cities in the history of mankind and is probably mentioned more than any other city in the Bible, with the exception of Jerusalem. Finally judgment breaks like a flood upon this city and its system. The judgment of God may be delayed, but it is sure. It may seem to us that the unbeliever is getting by with sin, but God's judgment is coming.

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double [[Rev. 18:6](#)].

Render unto her even as she also rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works; in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.

This is poetic justice (see [Obad. 1:15](#)). The cup of iniquity is being filled to the brim; when the last drop is poured in, it is pressed to the lips of those who committed iniquity. My friend, this is just -- read [Psalm 137](#). God is right and just in what He does.

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow [[Rev. 18:7](#)].

How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton (lived in luxury), so much give her of torment and mourning; for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning.

You see, the prosperity of Babylon blinded her to the judgment of God. Trading was active on the stock market, and everyone bought blue chip issues right up to the moment of judgment. Luxury, arrogance, pride, sin, and self-deception characterized the spirit of this godless city. World peace was in sight, and optimism was the spirit of the day. Only the prophets of gloom issued a warning, and they were classified as "squares," as was Noah (and as Vernon McGee is today).

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her [[Rev. 18:8](#)].

This calls to our attention the suddenness of destruction and that it will be by "fire." So great is her grief that "mourning" is counted a plague along with "death" and "famine." Death, mourning, and famine are the three horsemen who ride roughshod over Babylon. The destruction is total and final. In the Scriptures this is the first city of prominence, but its long, eventful and sinful history ends with the judgment of God upon her.

"For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." It is God who destroys this city because He alone is able to do it. He does this, we believe, at the return of Christ. Notice this as Isaiah predicts it: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come" ([Isa. 63:1-4](#)).

In His second coming Christ is seen coming from Edom with blood-sprinkled garments. It is my belief that He has come by way of Babylon, and He has executed judgment upon that wicked city. We will see Christ's second coming in the following chapter.

Next we will see the reaction to the destruction of this great center. There will be anguish in the world, and we will see who attends her funeral. Also there will be the anticipation of joy in heaven because of the judgment of Babylon. These are the two diametrically opposite viewpoints. It will be bad for one crowd and good for the other crowd.

Anguish In The World Because Of Babylon's Judgment (18:9-19)

And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come [[Rev. 18:9-10](#)].

And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived deliciously (in luxury) with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

In that day Babylon will dominate and rule the world. The capital of Antichrist will be Babylon, and he will have the first total dictatorship. The world will become an awful place. In that day everything will center in Babylon. The stock market will be read from Babylon -- not New York. Babylon instead of Paris will set the styles for the world. A play, to be successful, will have to be a success in Babylon, not London. Everything in that city will be in rebellion against almighty God, and it centers in Antichrist.

No one dreamed that this great city would be judged. Yet by the time the sun goes down, Babylon is nothing but smoldering ruins. When the news goes out, the world is stunned, and then begins the wail. The whole world will howl when Babylon goes down. I imagine that, if you were on the moon, you would have to tune down your earphones because the howl would be so loud!

In chapter 17 we saw that the kings of the earth hated religious Babylon and that Antichrist got rid of it in order that he might be worshiped without any competition in that area of religion. And the kings of the earth joined in her destruction.

In contrast to this, here in chapter 18 we see that the kings of the earth love commercial Babylon because of the revenue she brought to their coffers. In fact, it is called here fornication -- you can't find a better word for it than that! All the lobbyists were in Babylon, not Washington, D.C. They were representing all the great corporations in the world. But the kings desert Babylon like rats leaving a sinking ship; their mourning is both pathetic and contemptible. They eulogize her with panegyrics of praise, but there is a hopelessness in their anguish. They marvel at the sudden destruction of that which they thought was gilt-edged security. The judgment came in the space of one hour, reminding us of the sudden devastation caused by atomic explosions. This is a frightful picture presented to us, and it is the final conflagration and catastrophic judgment that will bring Christ to the earth to set up His Kingdom.

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

For in one hour so great riches is come to nought [[Rev. 18:11-17a](#)].

As you read these verses, did you feel as if you might be window-shopping down the main street of some of our great cities? In our store windows we see all these things in our day. These are the products of an affluent society, and these things were available to the Roman Empire in John's day. Babylon will make these luxury items necessities, just as we think these items are necessities today. You will not find a cotton dress or a pair of overalls anywhere in this list.

I remember when glazed bitreous terra cotta bathtubs first were introduced in this country. (Incidentally, it was opposed by the doctors in our land. They said that if you took a bath every day, it would shorten your life. They felt a bath once a week or once a month was enough.) In those days the bathtub was a luxury that many folk couldn't afford. But now, when we go to a hotel or motel, my wife looks to see if there is a tub, and I look to see if there is a shower, and generally both are present. We live in a luxury age. Most of what we call necessities are actually luxuries.

Let's look at these items, using my literal translation. We will take them up separately:

"And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise (cargo) any more: merchandise (cargo) of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls." Talk about a depression -- they are having one! No one buys their merchandise or cargo anymore. In Babylon there is merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls. You see, we are in the jewelry department here.

Then we move from the jewelry department to the ladies' ready-to-wear: ". . . and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet."

Then to the luxury gift department: ". . . and all thyine (citron) wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble."

We move on to the spice and cosmetic department: ". . . and cinnamon, and spice (amomum), and odours, and ointment, and frankincense." They have a great deal of spray deodorant, you see -- probably the kind that works twenty-four hours a day.

Now we go to the liquor department and the pastry center: "and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat." This is the food of the rich; barley is the food of the poor. The wealthy were eating gourmet food and enjoying luxury until Babylon went down.

We move on to the meat department where you can get porterhouse steaks, lamb chops and filet mignon -- "and cattle, and sheep."

The merchandise covers every phase of business. The articles are for a society accustomed to the better things of the material universe. Even men were bought and sold, including their souls. I think this is becoming more and more true today where great corporations have men on the payroll who are bound there almost like slaves. Right now there is many a woman selling her soul. "And merchandise of horses, and chariots, and slaves (bodies), and souls of men."

"The merchants of these things who grew rich by her, shall stand afar off because of the fear of her torment, saying Alas, alas." The Greek word for "alas" doesn't need to be translated to get its meaning. It is ouai, ouai! The very sound of the word is a form of wail. The merchants of the earth sit before their TV screens and cry, "Ouai, ouai!" for in one hour wealth so great is laid desolate.

We always have been able to find a parallel in the Old Testament. Do we have anything that corresponds to this in the past? Yes, Ezekiel predicted the judgment of Tyre, the capital of the Phoenicians. Tyre was to the ancient world what New York City is to us today and what Babylon will be to the future (see [Ezek. 26](#) -- [Ezek. 27](#)).

And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors,
and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off.

And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What
city is like unto this great city!

And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing,
saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that
had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is
she made desolate [[Rev. 18:17b-19](#)].

And every shipmaster and every one that sails anywhere (traveler) and sailors, and those who live by seafaring stood afar off. And cried out when they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe [Gr.: ouai, ouai], the great city wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costly expenditure! for in one hour is she made desolate.

The third delegation of mourners is composed of those who are engaged in transportation, the great public carriers. They had become rich by transporting the merchandise of Babylon, just as the Phoenicians had done in the ancient world. Now there is no more business. They mourn because of the depression. All went up in smoke in a moment. They, like the others, marvel at the sudden destruction.

All of this has an application for us. How do we see the luxury of this world? Do we see it as it really is? Can we use it without getting it into our hearts? How would you feel if

the luxuries in your life which you have come to consider necessities suddenly went up in smoke?

Today we speak about spirituality and spiritual things. Even in our Christian organizations there is almost an overweening zeal to get people to give, especially the wealthy people. Recently some wealthy persons threatened to withdraw their support from my radio ministry if I did not do a certain thing. I did not listen to their threats. It seems to me that we have paid too much attention to this world today. The world is passing away, and the things you see at your fingertips are also passing away.

The great cities of the world are passing away. Los Angeles is a wonderful city, and I have enjoyed this city because I have lived in Southern California for many years, but it is passing away. God is going to judge Los Angeles. But the question is: Would it break your heart if you saw the things of this world go up in smoke? Or is your heart in heaven, fixed on Christ? It does make a lot of difference.

Anticipation Of Joy In Heaven Because Of Babylon's Judgment (18:20-24)

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets;
for God hath avenged you on her [[Rev. 18:20](#)].

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

The viewpoint of heaven is entirely different. It is no funeral procession there. Rather, it is the celebration of an anticipated event. The saints prayed for it; the prophets of the Old Testament predicted it. Now all is fulfilled and there is joy because God has exonerated His name. Judgment has come upon these things. Just what is your heart fixed on today? It will make a lot of difference in that day because you will either be with the mourners or you will be with the rejoicers.

And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all [[Rev. 18:21](#)].

And one strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty rush (fall) shall Babylon, the mighty city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.

Even heaven calls our attention to the violence, the suddenness, and the complete annihilation of Babylon. Like a stone that makes a big splash and then disappears beneath the waves will Babylon come to an end.

And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by the sorceries were all nations deceived [[Rev. 18:22-23](#)].

Again, using my translation: "And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee." You see, rock music will go out of style then -- and I thank God for that!

"And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft shall be found any more at all in thee." All the factories will close down.

"And the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee." All the neon lights on Broadway will go out.

"And the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee." It's all over -- no more marrying and giving in marriage here.

"For thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived." I believe that more and more we are going to see sorcery, magic, and demonism. Satanism will increase more and more as we draw near the end of the age. It will be Satan who is going to deceive and blind people, just as he blinds many in our day.

Popular music comes to an end in Babylon. Jazz and rock 'n' roll cease in the destruction. Classical music will be stilled, also.

The crafts that have been prostituted to the service of the Antichrist will end. The wheels of the factories will never turn again. The bright lights of the cities will go out forever. It is interesting to note the beginning of all these things are recorded in [Genesis 4:16-22](#). Also, social life and family life shall end. The great tycoons of big business will disappear. This city deceived the world with the worship of Antichrist -- this is the strong delusion.

And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth [[Rev. 18:24](#)].

God's people got rough treatment in this city and God judged it. This is Satan's city, and he was a murderer from the beginning. Babylon was a city that murdered; its final crime was the slaying of God's people.

As we contemplate the destruction of Babylon, we think of other great cities and civilizations of the past which have fallen. One of the most widely read books of all time is *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* written by Edward Gibbon in 1788. In it he gives five basic reasons why that great civilization withered and died:

1. The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis for human society.
2. Higher and higher taxes; the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.

3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting, more brutal, more immoral.
4. The building of great armaments when the real enemy was within -- the decay of individual responsibility.
5. The decay of religion; faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, losing power to guide the people.

The oft-heard warning that history repeats itself has an ominous meaning in the light of the above. We can already see these five things at work in our contemporary culture in this country. The same things will bring Babylon down at the end. They destroy the nation and the home and the individual.

Thank God, the sad story of man's sin will come to an end.

This chapter brings to a conclusion the frightful period which was labeled by the Lord Jesus Christ the Great Tribulation. In the next chapter we will see Him coming to the earth to bring to an end this dark, doleful, and disastrous period.

This is the negative aspect to His coming. The positive side is the dawning of the Day of the Lord, called the Millennium or thousand years in chapter 20.

Now let's take a final look at the Great Tribulation period with its catastrophic and cataclysmic events taking place in rapid succession like a machine gun firing.

The total period is seven years. It is the "seventieth week" of Daniel's prophecy. In the Old Testament Daniel divided it, and in the New Testament John divided it into two separate and equal periods of three and one-half years each.

However, after the church leaves this earth, the Antichrist comes to power as world dictator on a platform of peace, prosperity, and fame. During the first part of the Tribulation he will bring about radical changes that seem to benefit mankind. He will bring in a false peace. All government and religion are to be controlled by him. When that time comes, there will be one world, one religion, and one everything. The world will believe that they are entering the Millennium and that the world will become a Utopia. This is part of the big lie of that period. The true church, the body of Christ, will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation begins. It will become the bride of Christ, and we will see this bride shortly -- near the end of this book.

Israel will once again become God's witness on earth -- 144,000 strong, sealed by the Spirit of God. And they will witness here upon the earth. Also, there will be a great company of Gentiles that will be sealed.

Somewhere near the middle of the seven-year period the king of the north, and I believe it will be Russia, will move against Israel. God will judge Russia just as He judged Sodom and Gomorrah. If you want to see that picture, you will find it in [Ezekiel 38](#). This opens the floodgates of war. The Antichrist now begins to move, and the deception, I think, will become apparent to a great many folk. Restless mankind, under the control of Satan, begins to march. The world begins to fall apart, like a pear that is too ripe. The Man of Sin, the Antichrist, breaks his covenant with the nation Israel.

The Mideast will become the center of world activity during this period. Babylon will be the political and economic capital of the world, and Jerusalem (also called Babylon) will be the religious capital. The Antichrist will begin in Rome, and the False Prophet will begin in Jerusalem. Antichrist, when he comes to power, will rebuild Babylon. The apostate church will be destroyed by Antichrist and by the kings of the earth who will be subservient to him.

Ancient Babylon on the Euphrates River will become the political and economic center of the world. If a small nation in the Mideast can turn off the spigot to stop the flow of oil and thereby bring the world to its knees, what will it be when ancient Babylon in that very area becomes again the world center?

New York City will then be a whistle stop on the Toonerville Trolley or not even worth the legendary string of glass beads. Los Angeles will return to an adobe village and no longer will be the city of angels but a dwelling place of demons -- it appears as if they are already beginning to move in. London and other great cities of the world will become mere villages with muddy streets. Judgments from God will fall swiftly and suddenly on a God-rejecting and blaspheming world. At one fell swoop one-fourth of the population of the world will be destroyed, and at another time one-third will be blotted out. Nature will be afflicted -- the grass and trees of the earth, the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens. One disaster after another will fall on the earth, but the heart of man will still be unrepentant. In fact, he will defy and blaspheme the God of heaven.

Then armies will march toward Israel. For three and one-half years the war will rage. It is not the Battle of Armageddon but the War of Armageddon. Millions of men will march at that time in that land. They will be engaged in a conflict there, but they will be destroyed. There will be blood up to the bridles of the horses -- about three feet deep! That is no exaggeration.

Into this horrible arena of chaos -- the chaos of man's making and of Satan's scheming -- comes the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Yes, the King is coming to the earth but, before all of this can take place, His church must be removed from the earth and go to be with Him. Then the church will return to the earth with Him when He comes to establish His Kingdom. The church is not looking for the fulfillment of any of these things which we have looked at from chapter 4 through chapter 18. The church is looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We do not know the day when Christ will return. We do not even know the period in which He will return. It may be soon. It could be today. On the other hand, He may not return for a hundred years or even several hundred years. No one can say with certainty when the Lord will return for His church. Anyone who sets a date for the Lord's appearing is entirely out of order. Anyone who claims to know when the Lord will return has information that is not in the Word of God.

The best that can be said today is that everything that is happening is significant. We live in a great period in the history of the world, but all we can say for sure is that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

The late Dr. Bill Anderson of Dallas, Texas, used to say, "God is getting the stage all set. It looks like He is coming soon. But if He is not planning to come now, and since it would take a lot of doing to get the world in this position again, if I were the Lord, I would just come on now and take the church out of the world."

Well, we hope He will come now, but all we know is that the terrors of the Tribulation will take place after the church has been removed at the Rapture. We have been given no signs by which to gauge the time of His return, but we do see the setting of the stage. And we see some very significant things happening in our day. Obviously, Western Europe is looking for a man strong enough to put the Roman Empire back together. And Antichrist is coming. They may not know it, but they are waiting for him. Also, we see a great power in the north -- Russia. Egypt is alive again. China was a sleeping giant that we woke up, and from that great population center they are going to come marching out one of these days. Then the crowning scene of the setting of the stage is Israel, which is back in her land. Everything is in position, the church could be raptured at any moment, and the Tribulation could begin. But it may not. We do not know the day or the hour.

Chapter 19

THEME: Marriage of the Lamb and return of Christ in judgment

Now we come to the thrilling events that concern us. In chapter 19 we turn the page to that which marks a drastic change in the tone of Revelation. The destruction of Babylon, the capital of the Beast's kingdom, marked the end of the Great Tribulation. The somber gives way to the song. The transfer is from darkness to light, from the inky blackness of night to a white light, from dreary days of judgment to bright days of blessing. This chapter makes a definite bifurcation in the Book of Revelation and ushers in the greatest event for this earth -- the second coming of Christ to the earth to establish His Kingdom. It is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the millennial kingdom that He will establish upon this earth. Great and significant events are recorded here. The two central features are the marriage supper of the Lamb and the return of Christ to the earth. One follows the other.

The hallelujahs open this chapter and the opening of hell concludes it. Two great suppers are recorded in this chapter: the marriage supper of the Lamb and the cannibalistic feast of carrion after the last part of the War of Armageddon.

Four Hallelujahs (19:1-6)

As chapter 19 opens, the voices of heaven become one chorus.

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God [[Rev. 19:1](#)].

As usual, I will give my translation of the literal Greek text throughout this chapter.

After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.

"After these things" (Gr.: meta tauta) is an expression we first bumped into when John gave the division of the Book of Revelation in chapter 1, [verse 19](#) -- literally, "the things that shall be after these things." After what things? After the church things. Chapter 4 opened with meta tauta, and we have been meta tautaing ever since. There is a chronological progression, a sequence of events. Now we will see what will take place after the Great Tribulation. It is recorded in this chapter: the coming of Christ to the earth. He is the only One who can end the Tribulation. And so this is the last occurrence of the expression meta tauta.

"A great voice of a great multitude." In the worship scenes of chapters 5 -- 7 we saw the elders, the church, and the uncounted numbers of angels and created intelligences all worshipping God. Now a great number of tribulation saints has been added to the chorus, and they are going to sing. This is something quite marvelous. This is the first time they have been able to utter the great note of praise of the Old Testament -- Hallelujah! This word occurs four times in the first six verses. This is its only occurrence in the New Testament. It is reserved for the final victory. It is interesting to note that hallelujah occurs frequently in the Book of Psalms. It means "praise the Lord." It appears in frequent succession in [Psalms 146](#) -- 150. In fact, [Psalm 150](#) is a mighty crescendo of praise. Hallelujah is a fitting note of praise at this juncture in the Book of Revelation. The Great Tribulation is over. Jesus is coming. The church is to be united with Christ in marriage. Hallelujah! Let's sing it, my friend! Every year I love to hear Handel's Messiah being sung, but regardless of what choir sings it, they don't even touch the rim of the great Hallelujah of this future day. [Psalm 104:35](#) puts it this way: "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise . . . the LORD" -- that is, Hallelujah! Hallelujah because God is coming to judge, and the wicked are going to be removed from the earth. Hallelujah is an expletive of praise as the final phase of salvation is coming to pass. This is something that Paul talked about in [Romans 8:18-23](#): "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

My friend, this is that great day which is coming. The earth will be released from the bondage of sin. In the meantime it groans. Go down to the seashore and listen to the waves. One summer I slept by the Atlantic Ocean in a place at Virginia Beach. Every night I was put to sleep by the breaking of the waves on the shore. But the waves were sobbing, as it were, sobbing out their sorrow. Go up in the mountains and listen at night to the wind going through the pine trees. There is not a soprano in all of those pine trees, nor is there a redwood that can sing soprano. Their sounds are all subdued, quiet groans as they await the coming of that great day upon the earth.

And we groan. I don't know about you, but I groan. When I was a young man and built my home in Southern California, I used to come bounding down the stairs. Now when I

come down the stairs, I groan with every step. My wife says, "You ought not to groan." I tell her that groaning is scriptural. We groan within these bodies, as the Scripture says. I'm all for groaning while we are here. But one day the groaning will be changed to hallelujahs, and that is what John is talking about here.

For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia [[Rev. 19:2-4](#)].

For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot who (formerly) corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And the second time they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah.

It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of all these judgments, those in heaven, who have more perfect knowledge than you and I have, are able to say that God's judgments are true and right. If you don't think what God is doing is right, it is because you, not God, are wrong. Your thinking is incomplete, of course, as mine is. God will be righteous in judging the great harlot. This is interesting because when we read about the judgment of the great harlot, representing the apostate church which went into the Tribulation, it says that the kings of the earth and the Antichrist destroyed the harlot. Yet here we are told that it was God who judged it. You see, God uses different instruments, and He will even use the Devil to accomplish His purpose. Those in heaven are saying, "True and righteous are his judgments," because the apostate church deserved to be destroyed; it had made martyrs of many of God's children.

In these verses we find a picture of the church in heaven saying, "Hallelujah." They say it twice. Why? As long as the imposter of the true church, the great harlot, is on the earth, the marriage of the Lamb will not take place in heaven. The anti-church is disposed of first, which makes way for the marriage of the Lamb. I assume that the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven sometime during the midst of the Tribulation which is going on upon the earth.

"He hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand." You see, believers are forbidden to avenge themselves. It is true that some of us try to do it, but the moment we do so, we forsake the walk of faith. In [Romans 12:19](#) God says to us: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." God will take care of vengeance for you. If we have been injured, and many of us have been, we want to hit back. That is natural; it is the old nature striking out. However, we are to turn that department over to God. He doesn't intend to let anyone get away with wrong. Vengeance is His. And He will bring judgment on this apostate system.

The twenty-four elders for the first time sing Hallelujah. The elders we believe to be the church (see [Rev. 4](#)). This is the last time the elders appear as such, for the figure changes now, and the church is to become the bride of Christ. The word church means "called out." Here on the earth we are the church, the called-out ones, but after we leave the earth we are the bride.

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth [[Rev. 19:5-6](#)].

And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as it were the voice of many waters, and as it were the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah; for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigneth.

"A voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God." Notice that the call to praise comes directly from the throne of God, because the Lord Jesus Christ is preparing to take control of this world. This is truly the Hallelujah Chorus and the most profound paean of praise in the entire Word of God. It takes us all the way back to that covenant which God made with David in which He promised that He would raise One upon David's throne who would rule the world. In [2Samuel 7:16](#) we read: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

But before Christ returns to the earth, there is going to be a wedding, and you and I, as believers, will be part of it.

Bride Of The Lamb And Marriage Supper (19:7-10)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints [[Rev. 19:7-8](#)].

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

This will be the most thrilling experience that believers will ever have. The church -- that is, the body of believers all the way from Pentecost to the Rapture -- will be presented now to Christ as a bride for a marriage. The marriage takes place in heaven, and this is a heavenly scene throughout.

In [Ephesians 5](#) the apostle Paul speaks about the husband and wife relationship when both are believers. By the way, he is speaking of those who are filled with the Spirit and

of the relationships that flow from it. You cannot have a Christian home without a Spirit-filled husband and a Spirit-filled wife. In fact, I do not believe you can know what real love is until both marriage partners are believers. Notice Paul's instructions: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" ([Eph 5:25-27](#)). This is the picture of the relationship of Christ and the church.

We are living in a day of "new" morality. Our contemporary society is drenched with sex. This generation knows a great deal about sex. I watched a young couple in Palm Springs one day, and I felt sorry for the boy and the girl. They were necking like nobody's business, right in public. I thought to myself. What do they really know about love? Why, they know nothing about what it means for a man to love a woman and a woman to love a man. I am afraid there are many Christians who don't know much about love either. Husbands, do you remember the first time you looked at your wife? Do you remember when you were joined in marriage and she became yours? Wasn't that a thrilling moment for you? Wives, do you remember when you first looked at that ugly old boy you married and thought he was so handsome? When he put his arms around you, wasn't that a thrilling moment? Well, [Ephesians 5:25-27](#) is a picture of that day when Christ is going to draw us to Himself, cleansed and purified. Young lady and young man, that is the reason in this day of "new" morality that you should bring purity to your marriage. God have mercy on some of you fellows who are married to second-hand girls. Don't get them at the second-hand store; get them brand new. It is much better that way.

"The marriage of the Lamb is come." Marriage is a marvelous picture of the joining together of Christ and the church. Notice that the Old Testament saints are not included -- only the believers during the church age are included. Even John the Baptist designated himself as only a friend of the Bridegroom. He said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom . . ." ([John 3:29](#)). The bride occupies a unique relationship with Christ. You see, Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Remember what He said in His High Priestly Prayer: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" ([John 17:23-26](#)).

The thing that is so wonderful is that we are going to know Christ -- really know Him -- for the first time.

"The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The wedding gown of the church is the righteous acts of the saints. This is a difficult concept to accept, because it is impossible for us to stand before Christ in our own righteousness. Paul wrote of this: "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" ([Phil. 3:9](#)). You see, by

faith we can trust Christ -- not only for the forgiveness of sins but for the impartation to us of His own righteousness. Then why does John say that the wedding garment is the righteous acts of the saints? Well, the wedding gown will be used only once, but we will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ throughout eternity. We as believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, not to be judged for our sins in reference to salvation, but for rewards. Through the ages believers have been performing righteous acts which have been accumulating to adorn the wedding gown. By the way, what are you doing to adorn that wedding gown? What are you doing for the Lord today?

Again let me quote Paul: "Now if any man build upon this foundation [which is Christ] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" ([1Cor. 3:12-14](#)). Gold, silver, and precious stones will survive the fire; wood, hay, and stubble will go up in smoke. Therefore the good works are the wedding garment of the church. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" ([Eph. 2:10](#)).

After the wedding, the wedding dress is laid aside. We have already seen that the elders placed their crowns at the feet of the Lamb, proclaiming that He alone is worthy. The church will reveal His glory: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" ([Eph. 2:7](#)). We will be on display -- sinners saved from hell, if you please, in heaven now. We have no right to heaven and would not go there except for the righteousness of Christ and the fact that we belong to Him. The relationship of Christ and the church is intimate, it is different, and it is delightful. No other creatures will enjoy such sweetness.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy [[Rev. 19:9-10](#)].

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden (invited) to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not; I am a fellow servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Hear me carefully now: the marriage of the Lamb will take place in heaven, but the marriage supper will take place upon the earth. The picture of this is in [Matthew 25:1-13](#), which is the parable of the ten virgins. You see, the virgins were not the bride. Christ has only one bride, and that is the church. The Bridegroom will return to the earth for the marriage supper. He will return not only to judge the earth but to have the marriage supper, which the ten virgins are expecting to attend.

Another picture of this same scene is given in [Psalm 45](#). In this psalm Christ is seen coming as king. We are not told who she is, but the queen is there: "Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" ([Ps. 45:9](#)). I believe this is a symbol or a type of the church.

Guests are present: "And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour" ([Ps. 45:12](#)). The marriage supper will take place on earth. Both Israelites and Gentiles who enter the Millennium are the invited guests. The marriage supper is evidently the Millennium. You talk about a long supper -- this is going to be a long one! At the end of the Millennium the church is still seen as the bride. Imagine a honeymoon which lasts one thousand years! Yet that is only the beginning. What joy! What ecstasy! The angel puts God's seal on this scene: "These are the true words of God."

After acting as a scribe for this scene, John feels compelled to worship the angelic messenger. However, he is restrained from doing so. The angel is but a creature. Only God is to be worshiped. What a rebuke to Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet who wanted to be worshiped. And there are many folk in our day who have that same desire.

After the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, the next great event is the return of Christ to the earth. My friend, the King is coming! But He will not come until after the church has been raptured and after the earth has undergone the Great Tribulation. Now when He comes to the earth, His bride will be with Him, and their marriage supper will be here upon the earth, as we have seen. Oh, my friend, what a glorious day is ahead of us! If we could only get our eyes off the muck and mire of this earth and onto that which is eternal!

Return Of Christ As King Of Kings And Lord Of Lords (19:11-16)

[And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.](#)

[His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself \[\[Rev. 19:11-12\]\(#\)\].](#)

And I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war. Now his eyes a flame of fire, and upon his head many diadems; having a name written which none knew but himself.

What a thrilling scene this is! Just to read it makes goose pimples come out all over me. This is the great climactic event toward which all things in this world are moving today. It is the coming of Christ to the earth.

Let me take a moment to remind you where this fits into the picture. From chapters 4 -- 18 we were in the midst of the Great Tribulation period, a frightful period. It ends by the coming of Christ to this earth to establish His Kingdom.

In the past there has been a very naive notion relative to the future, which is still held by some folk who are not students of the Bible. It is this: One of these days Jesus is going to come, and all the dead will be raised. The good guys will be on one side and the bad guys on the other. Christ will make the division so that one will enter heaven, the other hell, and eternity begins. May I say again that this is a very naive notion.

You cannot read the Word of God without being conscious of the fact that He has a plan and program for this earth and that He is following it very carefully. The program, as we have outlined it, reveals that Christ's return to the earth takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation period, right before the establishment of His Kingdom.

The contrast to His first coming is stupendous. It is absolutely remarkable.

At the time of Christ's first coming, as George Macdonald put it:

They all were looking for a King
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

That is the way He entered the world the first time. He was meek and lowly. He was the Savior who died for sinners. Now in the verses before us we see Him coming in His great glory. His coming will be the final manifestation of the wrath of God upon a sinful world. The rebellion of Satan, demons, and men is contained, put down, and judged. He puts down all unrighteousness before He establishes His Kingdom in righteousness.

Heaven is opened in chapter 4, [verse 1](#), to let John, as a representative of the church, enter heaven where he sees the elders, that is, the church, already there. And here in chapter 19 heaven opens to let Christ exit. The white horse on which He rides is the animal of warfare. When Jesus was on earth, He rode into Jerusalem upon a little donkey which, though an animal of kings, denoted peace, not war.

He is called "Faithful" because He has come to execute the long-time program of God. Remember that the scoffer said, "Where is the sign of His coming?" There is no sign at this point -- He is here. He has made good. He is Faithful. He is the only One you and I can trust and rest upon.

He is called "True" for He is inherently true. He is not one who just tells the truth, although He does that; He is the bureau of standards of truth. He is the yardstick of truth. He is the Truth. How wonderful it is to have Someone in whom to trust in this day when everything we hear is slanted and used as propaganda.

He has come to "judge and make war" -- not to die on a cross again.

"Now his eyes a flame of fire." Back in chapter 1, [verse 14](#), His eyes were as a flame, as He walked among the churches, judging them. But now there is a difference -- "his eyes a flame of fire" because He has come to judge the earth and put down its unrighteousness.

"Upon his head many diadems" indicates that He will be the sole ruler of this earth. And His rulership is going to be a dictatorship, I can assure you of that. My friend, if you don't love Jesus Christ -- if He is not your Savior -- and you live to enter this period of His

return to the earth, it is going to be a most uncomfortable period for you because Christ is going to be a dictator. A chicken won't peep, a rooster won't crow, and a man will not move without His permission. He is the King of Kings and He is the Lord of Lords.

"And he had a name written, that no man knew." What is this name that no one knew but Himself? He is given four names here which correspond to the Gospels:

1. "King of kings" corresponds to the Gospel of Matthew, since Matthew presents Christ as the King.
2. "Faithful and True" corresponds to the Gospel of Mark where He is presented as the Servant of God. The important thing about a servant is not his genealogy but his trustworthiness. Is he faithful and truthful? Those are the qualities that are important.
3. "Word of God" repeats what He is called in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word. . . . And the Word was made flesh . . ." ([John 1:1, 14](#)).
4. What is the name that no one knows? Well, I have a suggestion. Perhaps it corresponds to Luke's Gospel in which He is presented as Jesus, the Son of Man. In our day there is a great familiarity with that name, both in swearing and in blaspheming and in being overly free and presumptuous with Him. But, my friend, that is a name which you and I are going to probe throughout eternity. He is Jesus, the Son of Man. Do you really know Jesus? Well, no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and here we learn that when He comes, He has a name that no man really knows but Himself.

The apostle Paul, not at the beginning but at the end of his ministry, before his execution, said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" ([Phil. 3:10](#), italics mine). No one knows the Son but the Father. My friend, learning to know Him is one of the things that is going to make heaven heaven. He is so wonderful that it is going to take the rest of eternity to really know Him. The folk we meet down here are not very exciting folk when we get to know them, are they? But the more we know Jesus, the more exciting He will be.

In [John 14:7, 9](#), we read: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him [that is, in the Person of the Son]. . . . Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Then again in that High Priestly Prayer that Christ prayed: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" ([John 17:3](#)). When we come to Christ and receive Him as our Savior from sin, we have started to school. When we begin to know Him, we are in kindergarten. Let me make more or less of a confession. Since I have retired from the pastorate, I have set before me a goal: I want to know Jesus better than I do now. I get up every morning and look out the window -- I did this morning and in Southern California it is foggy -- but I say, "Lord, thank You for bringing me to another day. I love You. I love You, Lord Jesus, but, oh, You seem to

be so far away at times. I want to know You. May the Spirit of God make You real to me." The name Jesus -- oh, what it means, and what a person He is!

One more thing I would like to say about this subject: not only will we come to know the Lord better throughout eternity, we are also going to get to know one another better. I really don't think we know each other as we should. I find, at times, that I am greatly misunderstood. I make certain statements on the radio, and then I receive letters that almost shock me. It is difficult to understand how I could have been that misunderstood. But in heaven we are going to know as we are known. I think that will be good. Also, we will know ourselves. And we are going to know our loved ones. One summer when I tried to recuperate from an illness by resting, it enabled me to sit on my patio with my wife and get acquainted with her. It was quite wonderful. I discovered the sacrifices that she has made and her faithfulness down through the years. And I think I am really going to get acquainted with her in heaven. My friend, how glorious heaven is going to be! Even in this earthly life down here we find that when we grow in our love for Christ, we also grow in our love for each other.

Now notice the further description of Christ at His coming:

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And he hath on his vestures and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS [[Rev. 19:13-16](#)].

And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the All-ruler. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Notice that His garment is sprinkled with blood and that He is treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God. This picture takes us back to [Isaiah 63:1-6](#), which we have quoted previously.

Obviously, this refers not to Christ's first coming but to His second coming as described here in chapter 19.

"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron" takes us back to [Psalm 2](#); "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee [from the dead]. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy

possession. [He didn't get them at His first coming; how will He get them now?] Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" ([Ps. 2:6-9](#)).

The fury of His wrath at His second coming is in sharp contrast to His gentleness at His first coming. However, in both is revealed the "wrath of the Lamb."

"The armies . . . in heaven" are evidently the legions of angels that do His bidding.

The War Of Armageddon (19:17-18)

Now we come to the end of the War of Armageddon, and this concludes the final battle:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great [[Rev. 19:17-18](#)].

If there is one passage of Scripture which is revolting to read, this is it. You will notice that God included it at the end of His Word to remind us how revolting and nauseating to Him are the deeds of the flesh. Men who live in the flesh will have their flesh destroyed. This is an invitation at the end of the Battle of Armageddon to the carrion-eating fowl to a banquet on earth where they will have A-1, blue-ribbon flesh to eat -- kings and the mighty men of the earth. My friend, it is frightful to rebel against God because He is going to judge you someday. This scene reveals the heart of man and how dreadful that heart really is.

Hell Opened (19:19-21)

Now for the very first time hell is completely opened up:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh [[Rev. 19:19-21](#)].

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse and against his army. And the beast (Antichrist) was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshiped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with

brimstone; and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

What a frightful picture this is. The Beast and the False Prophet defy God right up to the very last. They dare to make war with the Son of God! Surely "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at the utter futility of their efforts. It is preposterous that there is such a rebellion of man against God. The outcome is inevitable. The two arch-rebels and tyrants, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, have the questionable distinction of being the first two who are cast into hell. Even the Devil hasn't been put there yet.

The question arises: Is the "lake of fire" literal? Well, let me give you something to think about because I am going to come back to this subject when we get to chapter 20. If hell is not literal, it depicts that which is worse than a literal fire of brimstone.

"The sword which came forth out of his mouth." What is that sword? An amillennial friend of mine asked me laughingly, "You don't believe that there is going to be a literal sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus, do you?" I told him that I would consider it to be literal if the Word of God had not made it clear that His Word is like a sword: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" ([Heb. 4:12](#)). "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" ([Eph. 6:17](#)). "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" ([Isa. 11:4](#)). Do you notice how clearly this symbol is explained by Scripture? The "sword" that comes from the mouth of Jesus is His Word. It was His Word that created this universe. It is the Word of God which will save you. And it will be the Word of God that will destroy the wicked at the end of the age.

Chapter 20

THEME: The Millennium

In the twentieth chapter we are dealing with the Millennium in relationship to Christ, Satan, man, the tribulation saints, the resurrections, the earth, and the Great White Throne. Unfortunately, a great many men in the past have thought that chapter 20 is not very important because the Millennium, the thousand-year period, is mentioned only here in Scripture, and therefore, they have practically dismissed this chapter altogether. It is true that the Millennium is mentioned only in this chapter, and it is mentioned as "a thousand years." Let's not argue about semantics. Millennium comes from the Latin word that means "one thousand." Millennium means a thousand years any way you slice it. You can call a person who believes in the Millennium a chiliast, and chiliasm is the way the early church spoke of it, because in the Greek chiliasm means "a thousand" also. I hope we understand that millennialism, chiliasm, and the thousand-year reign of Christ all refer to the same thing.

Chapter 20 is the division point for the three main schools of eschatology:

Postmillennialism assumed that Christ would come at the conclusion of the one thousand years. Man would bring in the Kingdom by the preaching of the gospel. This was an optimistic view which prevailed at the turn of the century. At that time it looked like there might be a great worldwide turning to Christ and the world would be converted. This viewpoint has become obsolete as it could not weather the first half of the twentieth century, which produced two world wars, a global depression, the rise of communism, and the atom bomb with which worldwide destruction is imminent.

Amillennialism has become popular only in recent years and has largely supplanted postmillennialism. The addition of the prefix a- simply negates the belief in the Millennium. Amillennialism holds out no false optimism and has, for the most part, emphasized the coming of Christ. Its chief weakness is that it spiritualizes the thousand years, as it does all the Book of Revelation. It fits the Millennium into the present age. Dr. B. B. Warfield's interpretation is that the Millennium is going on in heaven while the Tribulation is going on down here on the earth. My belief is that in heaven they have a millennium, not just for a thousand years, but from eternity to eternity. Most amillennialists fit the Millennium into the present age, and all the events recorded in Revelation are somehow fitted into the facts of history like pieces are fitted into a crazy quilt. Frankly, I think that the results of this viewpoint are about the same: you come up with a crazy quilt.

Premillennialism, on the contrary, takes chapter 20 at face value, as it does all of the Book of Revelation, applying the literalist interpretation unless the context instructs otherwise. Let me cite the example we gave from chapter 19 where it says that, when the Lord Jesus comes, out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword (see [Rev. 19:15](#)). Does this mean that a literal sword goes out of His mouth? I believe that Scripture makes it very clear that the sword is the Word of God. Paul writes, "And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" ([Eph. 6:17](#)). With that kind of instruction, I do not see how we can misunderstand what John is talking about, but you must have a scriptural reason for your interpretation. You cannot spiritualize Scripture on any basis you choose, although that is the present custom and the popular method today. In the premillennialist interpretation, the one thousand years are treated as one thousand years, and Christ comes at the beginning of the Millennium. Chapter 20 makes it clear that there can be no Millennium until Christ comes.

In the first nine verses of this chapter, we have the word for a thousand years repeated six times. It must be pretty important to put that kind of emphasis on it. The early church believed in what was known as chiliasm, the belief in the literal thousand-year reign of Christ. Those who rejected that position were considered to be in a state of heresy. Later on there came in the teaching that the thousand years would be established by the church. The church would produce a perfect world, and then Jesus would come and find everything in apple-pie order. But that is not the way this section of Scripture presents it. He is coming in judgment, and if everything were in apple-pie order, there would be no need to put down rebellion and to judge and make war.

It has not been too long ago that men actually believed that the church was going to build the Kingdom down here on this earth. Back in 1883 a commentator, Justin A. Smith, made this statement:

But upon the other hand, what a tremendous force is the Christianity of today when all is said. Is it conceivable that this auspicious power, which is so rapidly taking possession of the wide earth, can dwindle into the imbecility which some millennarians appear to predict for it?

Those of us who are premillennialists would be called a bunch of pessimists back in 1883 because we are predicting that the world is going to get worse and that there will be apostasy in the church. This man did not believe that, for he goes on to say:

It has been said that in twenty-five years more, if the present rate of progress continues, India will become as thoroughly Christian as Great Britain is today. There will be thirty millions of Christians in China, and Japan will be as fully Christianized as America is now. The old systems, they tell us, are honey-combed through and through by Christian influence. It looks as if a day may soon come when these systems, struck by vigorous blows, will fall in a tremendous collapse. Meantime, every weapon formed against Christianity breaks in the hand that holds it. Already, the Lord's right hand hath gotten Him victory.

But look at Great Britain today, for example -- it is as bad off as India is. They talked bravely in those days, but they do not talk that way today.

In the book *The Problems of Evil*, the author made this statement:

The civilization of Europe, or to call it by its true name which derives from its origin, the Christian civilization, is visibly making the conquest of the world. Its triumph is only a matter of time. No one doubts it.

There are quite a few who doubt it today. In fact, the so-called European civilization, or Christian civilization, is going down the drain and has largely disappeared already.

These men belittle the twentieth chapter of Revelation. I consider Dr. B. B. Warfield to be the greatest scholar that this century has produced, and I was educated under his system, but he says that there is no reference to such an age as a millennium here on this earth "save in so obscure a portion as [Revelation 20](#)." He pays no attention to all of the Old Testament where God made a covenant that He would establish this Kingdom on the earth through One in David's line.

Dr. Rothe many years ago said:

Our key does not open. The right key is lost. Until we are put in possession of it again, our exposition will never succeed. The system of biblical ideas is not that of our school at all.

In speaking with a student who had read a premillennial book and was enthusiastically telling him about it, Dr. R. L. Dabney, an honored theologian of the South in the past, said, "Probably you are right. I never looked into the subject." He was a great scholar but was honestly admitting that he had never studied prophecy!

The late Dr. Charles Hodge, who wrote two ponderous tomes on theology (and that was the theology I studied when I was in school), very frankly said that eschatology wasn't his bag -- only he didn't use that expression:

The subject cannot be adequately discussed without taking a survey of all the prophetic teaching of the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New. This task cannot be satisfactorily accomplished by anyone who has not made the study of the prophecies a specialty. The author, knowing that he has no such qualifications for the work, proposes to confine himself in a great measure to a historical survey of the different schemes of interpreting the scriptural prophecies relating to the subject.

Today all that has changed. There is a lively interest in prophecy, but I wish there were more who were as honest as Dr. Hodge was and would say, "I really haven't studied the subject as I should have." Unfortunately, a great many men are speaking on the subject of prophecy who have not actually studied it. This is a very important and vital subject. I do not claim to have any special qualifications for it at all, although I have studied it for forty years and have given a great deal of attention to it, even in the years past when it was largely ignored. But I think it is dangerous today that many are edging up to this matter of setting dates for the rapture of the church. I believe that the Rapture is absolutely a dateless event. It may be tomorrow, but it may not be tomorrow. We need to recognize that we are living in a period in which we are not given dates, but we are seeing the setting of a stage. I do not know what God has in mind for the future, but I do know that He sure has things in position.

I think it is obvious that I am premillennial and also pretribulational, and the reason is that I believe this is what John is teaching here. If you disagree with me and accept one of these other positions, you are in good company. Some of the finest men I have known hold a different viewpoint from mine, but if you want to be right, you will want to go along with me, of course!

First of all, there can be no Millennium until Satan is removed from the earthly scene. You could not have an ideal state down here as long as Satan is running loose.

In the second place, the curse of sin must be removed from the physical earth before a Millennium can be established. Scripture prophesies that the desert will blossom like a rose. If you live along the coast in California, the desert blossoms like a rose, but in eastern California, the desert is not blossoming like a rose. The curse of sin has not yet been removed from this earth.

In the third place, the resurrection of the Old Testament saints must take place at the beginning of the thousand years. If they were raised before the Great Tribulation, they would have to stand around and wait for the Millennium. There is no need for them to do that, and the Lord is not going to raise them until the Tribulation is over. Daniel makes this very clear: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" ([Dan. 12:1-2](#)). This is talking about Israel. Following the Great

Tribulation period will be the resurrection of the Old Testament saints (see [Isa. 25:8-9](#)). Only Christ will raise the dead (see [John 5:21, 25, 28-29](#)), so He must come for that purpose.

In the fourth place, the Tribulation saints are included in the resurrection of the Old Testament saints, and they reign with Christ during the Millennium.

Finally, the Millennium is the final testing of man under ideal conditions. This is the answer to those who say there is nothing wrong in man which circumstances and conditions cannot change. Man is an incurable, an incorrigible sinner. Even at the end of the Millennium, he is still in rebellion against God. The rebellion in the human heart and the depraved nature of man are impossible for any man to comprehend. If you and I could see ourselves as God sees us, we could not stand ourselves. But we think we are pretty good and that we are very nice people -- do we not? The Millennium is the final testing of mankind before the beginning of the eternal state.

The Millennium is God's answer to the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." When we pray the prayer which we mistakenly call the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Thy kingdom come . . . in earth, as it is in heaven" ([Matt. 6:10](#)). That is the Kingdom which He is going to establish here on earth, and it is called the Millennium. This is the Kingdom which was promised to David (see [2Sam. 7:12-17](#); [2Sam. 23:5](#)). God took an oath relative to its establishment (see [Ps. 89:34-37](#)). This is the Kingdom predicted in the psalms and in the prophets (see [Ps. 2](#); [4 Ps. 45](#); [110](#); [Isa. 2:1-5](#); [Isa. 11:1-9](#); [6 Isa. 60](#); [Isa. 61:3-62](#); [6 Isa. 66](#); [Jer. 23:3-8](#); [Jer. 32:37-44](#); [Ezek. 40](#) -- [Ezek. 48](#); [Dan. 2:44-45](#); [Dan. 7:13-14](#); [Dan. 12:2-3](#); [Mic. 4:1-8](#); [Zech. 12:10](#) -- [Zech. 14:21](#)). All of the prophets spoke of this Kingdom, the minor prophets as well as the major prophets -- not one of them missed it. These are but a few of the manifold Scriptures that speak of the theocratic kingdom which was the great theme of all the prophets in the Old Testament. This is the kingdom, the theocratic kingdom, that is coming here upon this earth.

Satan Bound One Thousand Years (20:1-3)

The opening verses of chapter 20 describe what is to precede the Millennium.

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season [[Rev. 20:1-3](#)].

Let me give you my translation of these verses:

And I saw an angel coming down out of the heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and locked

and sealed (it) over, that he should deceive the nations no longer, until the thousand years should be finished: after that he must be loosed for a little time.

You will notice that the thousand years are mentioned two times in [verses 1-3](#); they are mentioned a total of six times in the twentieth chapter. It is true that the Millennium is mentioned only in one chapter, but God mentions it six times. How many times does He have to say a thing before it becomes true? He mentions it more than He mentions some other things that people emphasize and think are important just because they occur once or twice in Scripture. Six times the thousand years are mentioned, and here it is in relationship to Satan.

There are some expositors who separate this section from the Millennium, classifying it as the closing scene of the Day of Wrath. This view takes the edge from the sharp distinction that there will be on earth at the removal of Satan. His incarceration and total absence from the earth change conditions from darkness to light. He is the god of this age; he is the prince of the power of the air, and his power and influence in the world are enormous -- beyond the calculations of any computer. His withdrawal makes way for the Millennium, for with him loose, there can be no Millennium. Therefore, we see that Satan's relationship to the Millennium is this: he must be removed from the earth's scene before it can take place. Men talk about bringing peace on this earth, about producing prosperity, and all that sort of thing. The world system will finally be headed up in the Antichrist, and he will not be able to accomplish peace and prosperity, although for a while it will look as if he will. But as long as Satan is abroad in this world, you cannot have a Utopia down here. You cannot have an ideal situation with him loose.

"An angel. . . laid hold on the dragon" -- Satan's great power is reduced, for an ordinary angel becomes his jailor and leads him away captive (see [Jude 1:9](#); [Rev. 12:7-9](#)).

"The abyss" is a better description of the prison than is "the bottomless pit." In either case, it is not the lake of fire, which we shall see in [verse 10](#).

"After that he must be loosed for a little time" is one of the imponderable statements of Scripture. Why is Satan loosed after God once had him put in the abyss in chains? Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer's answer to this question is significant: "If you will tell me why God let him loose in the first place, I'll tell you why God let him loose in the second place." Why did God let him loose? God has a great purpose in it. This is the great problem of evil: Why has God permitted it? Well, I believe that God is working out a tremendous program which is the mystery of God that is yet to be revealed to us. It is going to be revealed someday, and all He is asking us to do is to walk with Him by faith. We need to trust God and know that whatever He is doing is right.

I remember one time when my dad took me with him on a trip in his horse and buggy. A storm came up out there in west Texas and, being just a boy, I was frightened. The wind was blowing up a real storm, and we were getting wet. I never shall forget that my dad put his arm around me and said, "Son, you can trust me." I just snuggled right up to him and trusted him, and we got through the storm. My earthly father is gone -- he died when I was fourteen. I didn't have my earthly father very long, but I have had a heavenly Father now for a great many years whom I trust through the storms of this life. In all these

problems that come up, I wish I had the answers to give you, but I don't -- so let's both trust Him.

I once read a book on the problem of evil. When I finished the book, we still had the problem of evil -- the author did not solve it. It took him about two hundred pages to say what I can say in one sentence: I do not know the answer to the problem of evil. But, my friend, we will get the answer someday if we walk by faith.

God had Satan incarcerated for one thousand years because there could not be a Millennium without that.

Saints Of The Great Tribulation Reign With Christ One Thousand Years (20:4-6)

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years [[Rev. 20:4-6](#)].

And I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God; and whosoever worshiped not the wild beast neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead, or upon their hand. And they lived again and reigned with Christ one thousand years. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no authority [Gr.: exousian], but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Many are going to die for Christ in the Great Tribulation period, but they will live again and reign with Christ one thousand years. The Tribulation saints are going to trade in three and one-half years for one thousand years. I would say they are getting a pretty good deal. Those three and one-half years will be rugged and terrible, but the thousand years are going to be wonderful -- imagine living and reigning with Christ upon this earth!

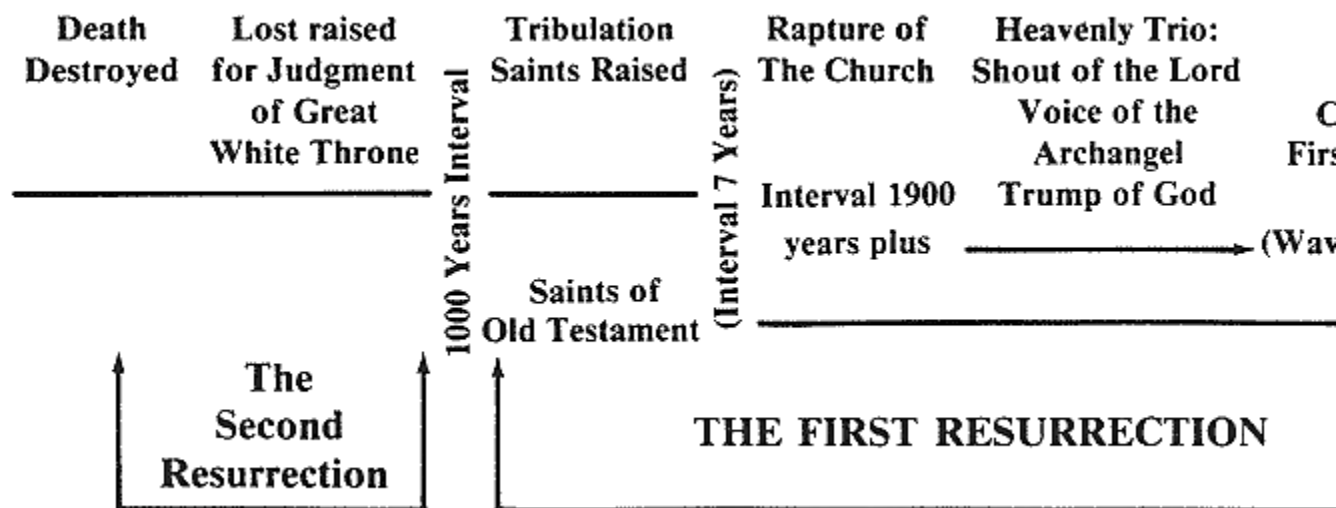
This prophecy is like any other prophecy in Scripture: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" ([2Pet. 1:20](#)). That is, you cannot just lift out a verse of Scripture and base doctrine on it; you need to have the corroboration of other Scriptures. When this passage here is treated as a dignified statement of literal facts, it becomes reasonable, and it fits into the entire program of prophecy which we have been following. Any attempt to reduce it to the lowest common

denominator of fanciful and figurative symbols makes the passage an absurdity. To spiritualize this passage is to disembowel all Scripture of vital meaning, making the interpretation of Scripture a reductio ad absurdum.

The thrones are literal; the martyrs are literal; Jesus is literal; the Word of God is literal; the Beast is literal; the image is literal; the mark of the Beast is literal; their foreheads and their hands are literal; and the thousand years are literal. It is all literal. A thousand years means a thousand years. If God meant that it was eternal, I think He would have said so. If He meant it was five hundred years, He would have said so. Cannot God say what He means? Of course He can, and when He says a thousand years, He means a thousand years.

The Greek word for "resurrection" is anastasei, which means "to stand up, a bodily resurrection." It is rather difficult for a spirit to stand up, and those who spiritualize this section are at a loss to explain just how a spirit stands up! This is the same word used by Paul in [1Corinthians 15](#) for the resurrection of Christ and believers.

"And I saw thrones and they sat upon them" is the one statement that is not entirely clear. Who are "they"? It is my judgment that they must be the total number of those who have part in the first resurrection, which includes the saved of all ages.



Picture: Diagram Of The Different Stages In The Resurrection

The first resurrection began with the resurrection of Christ. Then it is followed by the resurrection (at the Rapture) of His church sometime more than nineteen hundred years later -- but before the Great Tribulation (see [Rev. 4](#)). At the end of the Great Tribulation is the resurrection of both the Tribulation saints ("the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God; and whosoever worshiped not the wild beast") and the Old Testament saints (see [Dan. 12:1-2](#)). The diagram above gives the resurrection as a parade. Christ, the firstfruits of resurrection, leads the parade.

It is a rather simple and naive notion to think that somehow or another the world is going to end, Jesus will come, the dead will be raised, He will put the good guys on one side

and the bad guys on the other, they will move into eternity, and that is it. My friend, God follows a very definite program; He always has, and He moves intelligently.

The Tribulation saints and the Old Testament saints will evidently reign on this earth with Christ. I believe that David will be His vicegerent. The church, which is the bride of Christ, will reside in the New Jerusalem where she reigns with Him from that exalted place and, I believe, over a great deal of God's creation. Christ will commute from the New Jerusalem to the old Jerusalem on this earth. And I suppose that the church also will travel back and forth between its heavenly home and the earth.

Multitudes of both Israel and the Gentiles will enter the Kingdom in natural bodies, not having died. These are the ones, together with those who are born during the Millennium, who are tested during this millennial period. As Christ in a glorified body mingled with His apostles and followers, so the church in glorified bodies will mingle with the multitudes in their natural bodies here on the earth. In glorified bodies, the church will be able to move out into space. That will be the first time I will do any space traveling. I can assure you of that. Gravitation will not be able to grab me by my pants and pull me back to the earth in that day.

"They shall be priests of God" refers to the entire nation of Israel. This was God's original purpose for Israel: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" ([Exod. 19:6](#)). Abraham was a priest in his family. Levi was the priestly tribe, with the family of Aaron serving as high priest. In the theocratic kingdom here on this earth, the entire nation of Israel will be priests.

In Scripture there is more prophecy concerning the Millennium than of any other period. The Kingdom was the theme of the Old Testament prophets. I do not know how else you would interpret it. In our day we hear very little about the minor prophets. There is a great silence, a great vacuum and void, when it comes to the teaching of the minor prophets, yet all of them look forward to the Millennium, that Kingdom which is coming on the earth.

Satan Loosed After One Thousand Years (20:7-9)

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them [[Rev. 20:7-9](#)].

And when the thousand years are ended Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners (quarters) of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of

the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them.

Although the entire Book of Revelation deals with last things, especially do these last few chapters. Here is the last rebellion of Satan and man against God. The Millennium is a time of testing of man under ideal conditions, as this passage demonstrates. As soon as Satan is released, a great company, who have been under the personal reign of Christ under ideal circumstances, goes over to Satan. From where did such a company come is a worthy question. The answer lies in the fact that not only do multitudes enter the Millennium, but multitudes also are born during the Millennium (see [Isa. 11:6](#); [Isa. 65:20](#)). This will be the time of the earth's greatest population explosion. Disease will be eliminated. Since the curse of sin will be removed from the physical earth, it will produce enough foodstuffs to feed its greatest population. The human heart alone remains unchanged under these circumstances, and many will turn their backs on God and will go after Satan. This seems unbelievable, but what about today? Satan is doing pretty well in our day.

This rebellion following the Millennium reveals how terrible the heart of man is. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" ([Jer. 17:9](#)). You and I do not know how vile we really are. We just cannot bring our old nature into subjection to God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" ([Rom. 8:7](#)). These folk will live under ideal conditions during Christ's thousand-year reign, and I think they will get a little tired of it. When He reigns, He is really going to be a dictator -- you had better stay in line or else. But they do not like staying in line; therefore, when the opportunity is offered to them to rebel, they rebel. The nations of the earth again will come under the spell of Satan and will plot a rebellion.

Because the rebellion is labeled "Gog and Magog," many Bible students identify it with the Gog and Magog of [Ezekiel 38](#) -- [Ezekiel 39](#). This is not possible at all, for the conflicts described are not parallel as to time, place, or participants -- only the names are the same. The invasion from the north by Gog and Magog in [Ezekiel 38](#) -- [Ezekiel 39](#) breaks the false peace of the Antichrist and causes him to show his hand in the midst of the Great Tribulation. That rebellion of the godless forces from the north will have made such an impression on mankind that after one thousand years, that last rebellion of man bears the same label -- Gog and Magog.

We have passed through a similar situation in this century. World War I was so devastating that when war again broke out in Europe, involving many of the same nations and even more, it was also labeled a World War, but it was differentiated by the number two. We have World War I, World War II, and people today are predicting World War III.

I can use a further illustration from my personal life. In my family there were so many Johns on both sides of the family that my mother decided I should be J. Vernon McGee. My "J" stands for John, but I have never been called John. An uncle, two grandfathers, and my dad were all named John. So you will understand why I bear the name of J.

Vernon -- I had to be separated from that crowd. Just because we had a similarity of names does not mean that we were all the same person.

The war in [Ezekiel 38](#) -- [Ezekiel 39](#) relates to Gog and Magog I, and the reference here in [Revelation 20:8](#) is to Gog and Magog II. Although the names are the same, this is a different war, the last rebellion of Satan. Just because the two events involve the same names does not mean they are the same.

In [verse 9](#) there is the dropping of the last "atomic bomb." The phrase, "from God," is actually not in the best texts. It simply means that natural forces which destroyed Gog and Magog I will destroy Gog and Magog II.

This last resistance and rebellion against God was as foolish and futile as man's first rebellion in the Garden of Eden. Here it is not the beginning but the ending of man's disobedience to God. It is the finality of man's rebellion. Nothing remains now but the final judgment.

Satan Cast Into The Lake Of Fire And Brimstone (20:10)

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever [[Rev. 20:10](#)].

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the wild beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

This is a most solemn statement, and it is rejected by this lovey-dovey age in which we live. However, it is a relief to God's child to know that the enemy -- both his and God's -- will at last be brought to permanent justice. There is nothing here to satisfy the curiosity or the sadistic taste. The fact is stated in a reverent reticence which is awe-inspiring. If man had written this, having said this much, he could not have restrained himself from saying more. In that Sir Robert Anderson calls "the wild utterances of prophecy mongers," we see that men do not hesitate to go farther than does the Word of God. The Word of God is very restrained -- very little is said about this subject of hell, or even of heaven.

There are several facts here that contradict popular notions. First of all, the Devil is not in hell today. He is the prince of the power of the air. He is the one who controls this world to a large extent. God has limited him in our day, of course, but in the Great Tribulation period, he will have full rein for a while.

In the second place, the Devil is not the first to be cast into hell. The wild Beast and the False Prophet will precede him by one thousand years.

Finally, hell is described as a lake of fire and brimstone. The Lord Jesus is the One who gave the most solemn description of hell. Consider these Scriptures: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" ([Matt. 25:41](#)). "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matt. 8:12](#)).

This ought to make anyone stop and think: How can hell be outer darkness and also a literal fire? Jesus Christ also said: "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" ([Matt. 13:42](#)). "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" ([Mark 9:44](#)). In my thinking, fire is the best symbol that could be used of the reality that hell is. For instance, how are sins that men have committed in the spirit to be punished in the body? I believe that to be in outer darkness and the abyss is to be separated from God and to look back upon a life which has been misspent in this world. Can you think of any fire that would be hotter than for a man in hell to hear the voice of his son saying, "Dad, I followed you down here"? This is a solemn thing. A man asked Dr. Bill Anderson, "Suppose we get over there and find out that what you preach about hell is not true at all?" Dr. Anderson replied, "Then I will just have to apologize and say that I must have misunderstood the Lord. But suppose we get over there and find that it is true? What then?" My friend, it is true; this is the Word of God that we are looking at. We love [John 3:16](#), but what do we think about this?

Fire is a very weak symbol of the reality of what it means to be lost, to be separated from God for eternity. You cannot reduce these descriptions to something less than the reality, because a symbol is always a poor representative of the real thing. Nor can you dissolve this into the thin air of make-believe. The reality far exceeds the description, and human language is beggarly in trying to depict the awful reality. Hell is a place; it is also a state. It is a place of conscious torment. This is the language of the Word of God -- you cannot escape it.

Setting Of Great White Throne Where Lost Are Judged (20:11-15)

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them [[Rev. 20:11](#)].

The Great White Throne is what men mistakenly call the general judgment. It is general only in the sense that all the lost of all ages are raised to be judged here. All who are saved have been raised in the first resurrection. Even the Tribulation saints had part in the first resurrection. This is the second resurrection in which the lost are raised to be given an equitable, fair, and just evaluation of their works in respect to their salvation.

A man on his deathbed said to me, "Preacher, you just don't need to talk to me about the future. I'll take my chances. I believe God is going to be just and righteous and let me present my works."

I told him, "You are right. He is just and righteous, and He will let you present your works. That is what He says He is going to do. But I have news for you: At that judgment nobody is saved, because you cannot be saved by your works. When you stand in the white light of the righteous presence of God, your little works will seem so puny that they won't amount to anything at all."

The other day our little grandson brought to his grandmother some flowers that he had picked. I want to tell you, they were a sad looking bunch of flowers. With great pride he gave them to his grandmother, and his grandmother patted him on the head and thanked him for the lovely flowers. As I looked at that scene, I could not help but smile, but I also immediately recognized how solemn it is going to be when a lot of these goody-goody

boys stand with their little, bitty bouquets in the presence of a Christ whom they have rejected. They expect that He will be like a grandmother who will pat them on the head and say, "What a smart boy you were!" My friend, this is solemn, and this is serious. You need Him as Savior in order to stand in His presence; you need to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Don't you know that without this we are sinners and we are lost?

We like to compare ourselves with other people: "I'm as good as the Joneses down the street." Sure you are, but you ought to know about the Joneses! It was Samuel Johnson who said, "Every man knows that of himself which he dares not tell his dearest friend." You know yourself, don't you? You know things that you have covered up and smothered that you would not reveal for anything in the world. The Lord Jesus is going to bring them out at this judgment; while you are presenting your little bouquet, He is going to tell you about yourself. My friend, you need a Savior today.

This is the Great White Throne, and the holiness of this throne is revealed in the reaction of heaven and earth to it: "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." Of this, John F. Walvoord, in his book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, comments:

The most natural interpretation of the fact that earth and heaven flee away is that the present earth and heaven are destroyed and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth. This is also confirmed by the additional statement in [Rev. 21:1](#) where John sees a new heaven and a new earth replacing the first heaven and the first earth which have passed away.

The One seated on the throne is the Lord Jesus Christ: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . . For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" ([John 5:22, 26-29](#)).

What is the work of God? It is to ". . . believe on him whom he hath sent" ([John 6:29](#)). Those who have done good are they who have accepted Christ, and they come forth unto the resurrection of life -- that is the first resurrection. They who have done evil come forth unto the resurrection of damnation and condemnation -- that is the Great White Throne judgment.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works [[Rev. 20:12-13](#)].

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne; and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up

the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works.

Yes, my friend, you will be able to get a fair trial there. Your life is on tape, and Christ happens to have the tape. When He plays it back, you will be able to listen to it, and it is not going to sound good to you, by any means. Are you willing to stand before God and have Him play the tape of your life? I think He will have it on a television screen so that you can watch it, too. Do you think your life can stand the test? I do not know about you, but I could not make it. Thank God for His grace -- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" ([Eph. 2:8](#)).

The dead are classified as the small and the great. They are all lost, for evidently some have their names written in the Book of Life. They had never turned to God for salvation. The Lord Jesus said that in His generation ". . . ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" ([John 5:40](#)). These folk standing before His throne had not come.

These are books which record the works of all individuals. God keeps the tapes, and He will play them at the right time. There will be a lot of politicians who will have their tapes played in that day, and there will be a lot of public figures -- even preachers -- who will have their tapes played in that day, and they are not going to be happy about it. If you are saved, you are going to be happy about it. If you are saved, you are not going to stand before this judgment. Your works are to be judged as a child of God at the judgment seat of Christ, which will be for the purpose of rewards (see [2Cor. 5:10](#)). The Great White Throne judgment is the judgment of the lost. Multitudes want to be judged according to their works. This is their opportunity. The judgment is just, but no one is saved by works.

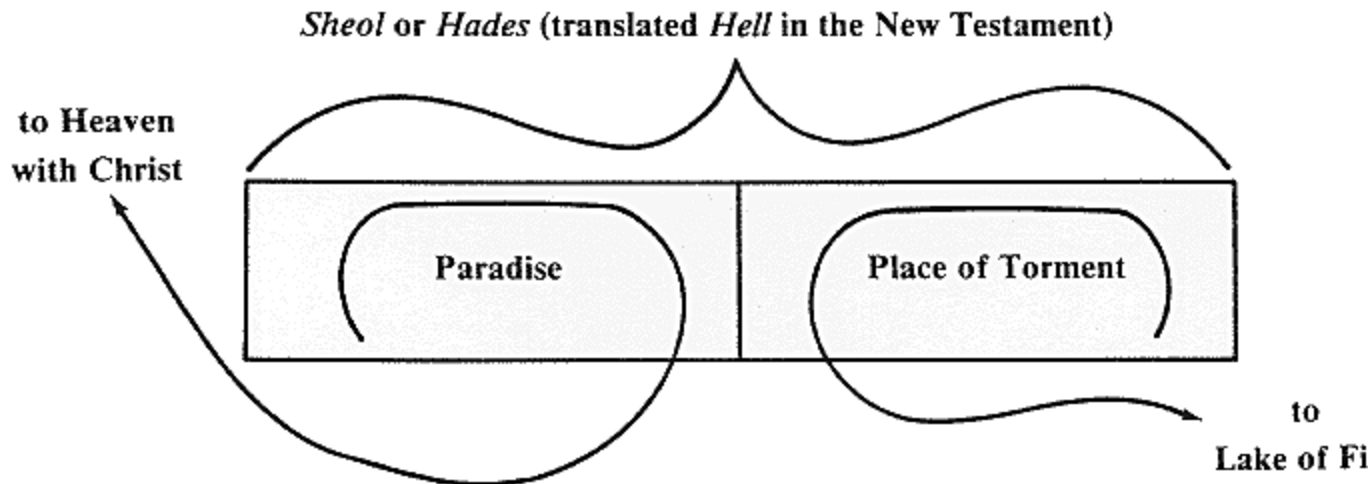
"And the sea gave up the dead that were in it." Multitudes who have gone to a watery grave in which the chemicals of their bodies have been dissolved in the waters of the sea will be raised. God will have no problem with this. After all, they are only atoms. He just has to put them together again. He did it once; He can do it again. The graves on earth will give up their bodies; and hades, the place where the spirits of the lost go, will disgorge for this judgment.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire [[Rev. 20:14-15](#)].

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death even the lake of fire. And if any were not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

You will notice that in my translation I have changed "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" to "death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." Sheol or hades (translated hell in the New Testament) is the place of the unseen dead and is divided into two compartments: paradise and the place of torment (see [Luke 16:19-31](#)).



Picture: The Two Places In Hades Paradise was emptied when Christ took the Old Testament believers with Him at His ascension. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)" ([Eph. 4:8-10](#)). Christ did two things: He gave gifts to men down here, but He also took with Him to heaven those Old Testament saints who had died and were in the place called paradise. But the place of torment will deliver up the lost at the judgment at the Great White Throne. All who stand at this judgment are lost, and we are told that they are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. The Lord also called it "outer darkness." We believe that this is symbolic of something worse than literal fire or outer darkness. It is eternal separation from God, for death means separation.

"Death," the great final enemy of man, is finally removed from the scene. No longer will it be said, "In Adam all die" (see [1Cor. 15:22](#)). Death is personified in this case, for it is man's great enemy. In the Old Testament we read: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes" ([Hos. 13:14](#)).

And Paul writes: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. . . . O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" ([1Cor. 15:26, 55](#)).

"Hades," the prison of lost souls, is likewise cast into the lake of fire. The lost are no longer in hades but in the lake of fire. This is where Satan, the wild Beast, the False Prophet, and their minions were consigned. If man will not accept the life of God, he must accept the only other alternative: eternal association with Satan. God never created man to be put in this place, but there is no other place for him. Hell was created for the Devil and his angels. I take it that it is a place where God never goes. The second death means eternal and absolute separation from God.

Chapter 21

THEME: Entrance into eternity; eternity unveiled

Eternity is unveiled in chapter 21 -- a new heaven, a new earth, a New Jerusalem, a new era, and the eternal abode of the Lamb's bride where we will be new creations in Christ Jesus without the old nature that manifests itself so much today. Adopting a popular aphorism of the day, it can truly be said that this chapter is "out of this world." This chapter hasn't anything to do with the earth (except for the first few verses). In it we see the eternal abode of the church. What really is heaven? There is a lot of sticky, sentimental stuff said about heaven, and we get quite weepy when we talk about heaven. However, heaven is a place, a very definite place. You will have an address there. Your name will be put on you so that in eternity, when you wander around into outer space and get lost, some angel will bring you home -- and you will have a home.

As the long vista of eternity is before us in this chapter, we move not only from time to eternity, but to a new creation. A new heaven, a new earth, and a New Jerusalem greet us. The redeemed have previously received glorified bodies like Christ's. All things have become new. A new universe suggests new methods and approaches to life. New laws will regulate the new universe. The entire lifestyle will change. Here are some of the changes that are suggested in [Rev. 21](#) through [Rev. 22](#):

1. There will be a total absence of sin and temptation and testing in the new creation. This in itself makes a radical difference.
2. The New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, does not mean another satellite for the earth, but rather the earth and all of the new creation with all of the galactic systems will revolve about the New Jerusalem, because it is the dwelling place of God and of Christ.
3. The law of gravity, as we know it, will be radically revised. There will be traffic between the New Jerusalem and the earth. The church will have already left the earth, and its dwelling place is the New Jerusalem. I believe that we will have entirely different bodies, and the law of gravity will not affect us; that is, the law of gravity of this earth or of any other planet.
4. There will be no sun to give light, for God Himself will supply it directly to the universe. There will be the absence, therefore, of night. There is no night there because we just do not need that time to rest since we will have new bodies. I am looking forward to that, by the way.
5. There will no longer be any sea on the earth. The sea occupies most of the earth's surface today; approximately three-fourths of the total surface is water. This denotes a revolution in life upon the earth. Just think of the parking space we will be able to have! There will be no fish to eat. Apparently man will be a vegetarian during the Millennium and throughout eternity, as he was in the Garden of Eden. Fruit is the only diet of eternal man (see [Rev. 22:2](#)).
6. The presence of Christ and God, together with the throne of God made visible, ushers in a new day for man -- the new creation.

New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (21:1-2)

John describes the passing of the heaven and earth we know in the opening verse of chapter 21.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea [[Rev. 21:1](#)].

As usual, I'll follow the Authorized Version with my own literal translation of the Greek text.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth passed away: and the sea is no more.

"And I saw" is the oft repeated statement of John to remind us that he was a spectator to all of these scenes. He was a witness to the panoramic final scene which ushers in eternity.

The Scripture clearly teaches that this present order of creation is to pass away in order to make room for a new heaven and a new earth. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away . . ." ([Matt. 24:35](#)). The old creation was made for the first Adam. Christ, the Last Adam, has a new creation for His new creatures. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" ([Isa. 65:17](#)). "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain" ([Isa. 66:22](#)).

God had promised Abraham a land forever and David a throne forever. Daniel prophesied of ". . . a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed . . ." ([Dan. 2:44](#)). The new earth will see the total fulfillment of these prophecies. Consider the faith of the Old Testament worthies: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" ([Heb. 11:13-16](#)). "Heavenly" does not mean they are going to heaven, but that heaven is coming to this earth. This is what we mean when we pray the so-called Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come . . . in earth, as it is in heaven" ([Matt. 6:10](#)).

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" ([2Pet. 3:13](#)). In his second epistle Peter declares plainly that the present earth on which we live will be destroyed by fire: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" ([2Pet. 3:7, 10-11](#)).

The chief characteristic of the new earth, as we have suggested, is the absence of the sea. This would automatically change the climate, the atmosphere, and the lighting conditions. It is impossible for the human mind to comprehend the great transformations which will take place in a new creation. The sea in the past has been a barrier and also a border for mankind, which in some cases has been good and in others bad. Also, the sea was an instrument of judgment at the time of the Flood. However, by the disappearance of the sea, the population on the earth can be doubled again and again because of the increase of the land surface.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [[Rev. 21:2](#)].

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

This is the part which should interest us. I believe that the New Jerusalem is where those of us who are children of God are going to live. When you talk about going to heaven, what do you think about it? To most people it is just "a beautiful isle of somewhere." However, it is a definite place. It is a city called the New Jerusalem. It is a planet within itself. Very candidly, very little is said in Scripture about heaven -- but here it is, and that is the reason this ought to be important to us.

"I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." This New Jerusalem should not be identified with the old Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem down here.

I cannot think of a lovelier description than this: ". . . made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." It has been my privilege in my many years in the pastorate to have married several hundred couples. I have never seen an ugly bride -- they are always lovely. At the wedding ceremony, after the solos have been sung, the preacher walks in followed by the bridegroom and the best man. Nobody pays any attention to the bridegroom except his mama. She smiles at him and thinks he's wonderful, but nobody else looks at him. In a minute here comes the bride-to-be and, I tell you, everybody stands up and looks at her. I have never yet seen an ugly bride. On occasion when I would return from a wedding which my wife did not attend, she would always ask me, "Was the bride beautiful?" And I would always answer, "Yes. I've never seen an ugly one." Don't think that I am just a doting old man when I say that. I have seen some brides before they got married or after the wedding, and I have wondered if she were the same girl who had come down the aisle. God gives to them at that time a radiance and a beauty. That is a thrilling moment for the bridegroom to look down the aisle and see the one whom he is going to make his own -- she will belong to him. It seems that for that moment God transforms every girl into a lovely bride. I think the reason He does it is that the New Jerusalem where we are going to live is like the bride adorned for her husband. What a picture we have here!

The New Jerusalem is the habitation, the eternal home that is prepared for the church. The Lord Jesus said: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#)). You could not have a more lovely or more appropriate picture given.

We have seen in [Revelation 19:7-8](#) that ushering in the millennial period, actually before Christ returned to the earth, was the marriage of the Lamb, and the bride was the church.

This passage is the fulfillment of what Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" ([Eph. 5:25-26](#)).

At the judgment seat of Christ, there will be the straightening out and the judging of believers. Everything that is wrong will have to be corrected. All sin will be dealt with there. Rewards will be given out. And He is going to do something else -- He is going to cleanse the church with the Word. The Word of God is a mighty cleansing agent. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" ([Eph. 5:27](#)).

This is the picture we are getting here in chapter 21. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, is coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband. The marriage took place before the Millennium, and the Millennium is now over. This has sure been a long honeymoon, hasn't it? I think it is one that will go on into eternity.

Paul continues to talk about this marvelous relationship between Christ and the church, comparing it to human marriage down here. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" ([Eph. 5:28-32](#)). This idea is a mystery that is now being opened to us. The marriage relationship is the most beautiful and wonderful relationship. It is the oldest ceremony that God has instituted for man. It goes right back into the Garden of Eden, to the very beginning, and it is all-important. It is such a profound mystery that, even with all these marriage counselors and all the books they have written, I do not really think they have touched the fringe of how wonderful marriage could be for believers.

By the way, Paul is talking here to believers who are filled with the Spirit. All of these instructions are for Spirit-filled believers. They are not given to the lost world at all, and they are not given to the average believer. At the beginning of this section Paul says, ". . . be filled with the [Holy] Spirit" ([Eph. 5:18](#)). That is the only commandment in Scripture in which you are required to do something about the Holy Spirit.

We find here something that is difficult to understand, but it gives us another insight into marriage. The wife is the same flesh as the man. How can that be? Have you ever seen a beautiful child that looked like the mother and had a mean disposition like the father? That is where they come together, that is where they are one flesh. But it is deeper than that. When a man loves his wife, he actually loves himself. This is true of the wife also. When she loves her husband, she is actually loving herself. You cannot have it any more intimate than that.

When I injure my foot, I do not ignore it. I do all I can to care for it. I go to the doctor and if necessary have it put into a cast. It may not be very pretty, and I might like to leave my

foot at home, but it is part of me. Likewise, my wife is part of me. She is my flesh. We are the same flesh. This is difficult to understand, but that is how intimate it is. This takes us back to the time of creation: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" ([Gen. 2:23-25](#)). They were naked, and they knew each other. It was an intimate and a very personal relationship. After a couple gets married, when they have their first fight, the wife often turns over in bed, and he is in a huff and maybe goes to the sofa and lies there. Then they wonder why there is disintegration in their marriage relationship. When your foot gets sick, you don't ignore it. You don't get angry with it. You don't kick with it. If you do, you are in deeper trouble. The thing that you are to do with the flesh is to do everything to doctor it and try to get it well again. This is the reason that young couples ought never to have a squabble without sitting down and talking things over. I think the wife ought to be very frank with her husband and tell him everything -- how she feels, how he offends her, and what she thinks is wrong. And he ought to do the same thing. You see, they are the same flesh; they are one. They have been brought together in this very intimate, this very wonderful relationship in which a man leaves his family -- his father, his mother, and his brothers and sisters. He has now been joined to a woman, and they are one flesh. They have started a new creation, if you please, and that is what the marriage relation should be. How wonderful it is to see a family where the man and his wife have no barrier between them. She knows him like a book, and he knows her like a book. They simply know each other, and they love each other. Until that kind of relationship is established, my friend, you are going to have trouble in the marriage, because God made us that way. Marriage is more than an arrangement to live together and to sleep together. When a man chooses a wife and a wife accepts her husband, they must understand that they are one flesh -- and you would not hurt yourself, your own flesh, intentionally for anything in the world.

"This is a great mystery," Paul says, ". . . but I speak concerning Christ and the church" ([Eph. 5:32](#)). In heaven we are going to be like Him. John writes, ". . . it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him . . ." ([1John 3:2](#)). We are going to have glorified flesh like He has. We are going to be one with Him. We are part of His body, and we are going to be joined to Him. He said, ". . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . that where I am, there ye may be also" ([John 14:2-3](#)). How glorious that we can be with Him throughout eternity! As far as I know, no other creatures, including the angels of heaven, are going to have this personal and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is going to be the most glorious day! We are going to celebrate throughout eternity the very fact that we are with Him and that we have been joined to Him.

New Era (21:3-8)

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away [[Rev. 21:3-4](#)].

And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold the tabernacle [Gr.: skene, tent] of God (is) with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away.

"Behold the tabernacle [tent] of God is with men." What is the tent? We are told by John in [John 1:14](#), "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [pitched His tent] among us. . . ." That flesh was crucified on the cross, and He was raised in a glorified body. We, too, are going to have glorified bodies, and we are going to live with Him in the New Jerusalem. The golden street is not really important. What difference does it make what kind of asphalt you walk on? It is important to know the psychological and spiritual values that will be there.

"They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Certain things that definitely are prominent today are going to be removed: "God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." A columnist years ago wrote: "For every light that burns on Broadway, there is a broken heart." Several times my wife and I have driven up into the Hollywood hills and have looked down on that blanket of light which is Hollywood. I have said to my wife, "For every light down there, there is a broken heart." There is many a sad and lonely person in this world, but in the New Jerusalem there are not going to be any more tears.

"And death shall be no more" -- that is going to be a very marvelous improvement. Since you began reading this chapter, a number of funeral processions have taken place. People are dying all the time. There is a continual march to the cemetery. I once knew an engineer who in the early days had a great deal to do with the planning and plotting of the great freeways which crisscross this country today. I asked him, "Is it going over the mountains or down through the valleys or crossing the rivers that is the biggest problem for you?" He replied, "The big problem is missing the cemeteries." This earth is a great cemetery today, but all of that is going to end. There will be no burying ground in the New Jerusalem. The undertaker will be out of business. Even the doctors are going to be out of business because there is not going to be any crying, ". . . neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful [[Rev. 21:5](#)].

And He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He saith, Write, for these words are faithful and true.

He is going to make all things new! This is more meaningful to me than anything else. I do not know about you, but I have never really been satisfied with this life. I have found myself frustrated, I have found myself hemmed in, and I have never been able to

accomplish all that I have wanted to accomplish. I've never been the man I've wanted to be. I've never been the husband I've wanted to be. I've never been the father I've wanted to be. And I've never preached the sermon I've wanted to preach. I just do not seem to have arrived. All accomplishments seem to have a blot on them.

But He says to me, as He says to you, "I am going to make all things new. You are going to be able to start over again." I am waiting for that day when all things are going to be new and I can start over. Have you ever stopped to think about the potential of starting out all new again, of learning all over again, and never ceasing but going on into eternity? Oh, the potential and capability of man! Yonder at the Tower of Babel, God said, "I had better go down there, or nothing will be withheld from man" (see [Gen. 11:5-7](#)). It was very foolish for some scientists and preachers to say that man could not go to the moon; I think he is going farther than that. Man is a clever being which God has made. Death ends his potential down here, but with eternity ahead of him, oh, the prospects a saved man has!

We see here the glorious prospect of all things made new. We can start over, and there will never be an end to our growth. Remember that of Christ it is said, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (see [Isa. 9:7](#)). There is constant growth and development. Just think of the prospect of that for the future. Someday I am going to know something; today I don't, but I will then.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son [[Rev. 21:6-7](#)].

And He said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be God unto him, and he shall be the son to Me.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." This identifies the speaker as the Lord Jesus Christ, as He was identified like this in the first chapter of this book.

Believers in their new bodies will thirst after God and the things of God, and they will be satisfied: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." In [Matthew 5:6](#) the Lord Jesus said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

All believers are overcomers because of faith: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things." "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" ([1John 5:4](#)).

"I will be God unto him, and he shall be the son to Me." All the sons of God become sons through faith in Christ: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" ([John 1:12](#)).

They "inherit all things" because this was promised to the sons of God: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" ([Rom. 8:16-17](#)).

"The son to Me" is in the Greek *moi ho huios*. This is a very unusual expression. Vincent calls attention to the fact that this is the only place in John's writings where a believer is said to be a son (*huios*) in relationship with God. (In other passages another Greek word is used rather than *huios*.) God is the One who says "my son," and He says it here. Believers in the church are one of the peoples of God, but they are more. They are the sons of God in a unique and glorious fashion. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)).

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death [[Rev. 21:8](#)].

But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and defiled with abominations, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

There are several amazing features about this verse. First of all, the creation of the new heavens and a new earth did not affect the status of the lake of fire and of the lost. They are going into eternity just that way.

In the second place, there is no possibility of sin, which made man become fearful, unbelieving, liars, murderers, and all the rest, ever breaking over the barriers into the new heavens and the new earth. Sin and its potential are forever shut out of the new creation.

Finally, the lake of fire is eternal, for it is the second death, and there is no third resurrection. It is eternal separation from God, and there is nothing as fearful and frightful as that.

New Jerusalem, Description Of The Eternal Abode Of The Bride (21:9-11)

The appearance of this city is the quintessence of beauty, refined loveliness, and uncontrolled joy. Lofty language describes her merits, and descriptive vocabulary is exhausted in painting her portrait. The contemplation of her coming glory is a spiritual tonic for those who grow weary on the pilgrim journey down here.

The New Jerusalem is really a postmillennial city, for she does not come into view until the end of the Millennium and the beginning of eternity. This city was evidently in the mind of Christ when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (see [John 14:2](#)), but the curtain does not rise upon the scene of the heavenly city until earth's drama has reached a satisfactory conclusion. Earth's sorrow is not hushed until the endless ages begin.

The New Jerusalem will be to eternity what the earthly Jerusalem is to the Millennium. The earthly Jerusalem does not pass away, but it takes second place in eternity.

Righteousness reigns in Jerusalem; it will dwell in the New Jerusalem. Imperfection and rebellion exist even in the earthly Jerusalem during the Millennium; perfection and the absence of sin will identify the heavenly city. Just as a king's queen is of more importance than the place of his government, thus the New Jerusalem transcends the city of earth. This will cast no reflection on the earthly city, nor will it cause her inward pain. She can say in the spirit of John the Baptist, "She that hath the bridegroom is the bride" (see [John 3:29](#)).

The New Jerusalem is the eternal abode of the church. The New Jerusalem is the home of the church, the hometown of the church. This is a city toward which the church is journeying as she pitches her tent in that direction. We are now to look at this new home by reading the architect's blueprint in this twenty-first chapter

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife [[Rev. 21:9](#)].

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

What follows in [verses 9-21](#) is a description of the city. We have seen the psychological or spiritual aspects of it that are wonderful, but this physical description is also worth contemplating.

We must pause here to consider the relationship of the city to the citizens -- the city proper to the church. Certainly we are not to infer that the empty city without the citizens is the bride. The citizens are identified with the city in [Rev. 22:3](#), [6](#), [19](#). Those outside are identified here in [verse 8](#) as disfranchised. Although a distinction between the bride and the city needs to be maintained, it is the intent of the writer to consider them together.

This passage is a description of the adornments which reveal something of the love and worth that the Bridegroom has conferred upon His bride.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God [[Rev. 21:10](#)].

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

Certainly this city has no counterpart among earth's cities which are built upon an earthly foundation and are built up from that base. This city comes down out of heaven. She originates in heaven, and the Lord Jesus is the builder. Although the city comes down out of heaven, there is no suggestion that she comes down to the earth. The earthly city never goes to heaven, and the heavenly city never comes to earth. Just how far down the city descends is a matter of speculation.

This has led to extreme views in interpreting the New Jerusalem. At the very beginning, Ebionism, one of the first heresies, went to the extreme of applying this whole passage concerning the New Jerusalem to the earthly Jerusalem. The Gnostics, another early heresy, went to the other extremity in spiritualizing the passage to make it refer to heaven. Many modern "isms" apply the New Jerusalem to themselves and set it up on earth at the geographical location of their choice. Liberal theologians and amillennarians have left the city in heaven, in spite of the scriptural statement that it comes down "out of heaven." Two facts are evident from this passage: (1) It comes down out of heaven, and (2) it is not stated that it comes to the earth. This passage of Scripture leaves the city hanging in midair. This is the dilemma that many seek to avoid, but why not leave the city in midair? Is anything incongruous about a civilization out yonder in space on a new planet? The New Jerusalem will either become another satellite to the earth or, what is more probable and what I think is true, the earth will become a satellite to the New Jerusalem as well as the rest of the new creation. This chapter indicates that the city will be the center of all things. All activity and glory will revolve about this city. God will be there, it will be His headquarters, and His universe is theocentric (God-centered). The New Jerusalem is therefore worthy to merit such a preeminent position for eternity.

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal [[Rev. 21:11](#)].

Having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, shining like crystal.

Paul instructs the believers to ". . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God" ([Rom. 5:2](#)). This hope will be realized in the holy city. Man in sin has never witnessed the revelation of the glory of God. The experience of Israel in the wilderness taught them that each time there was a rebellion in the camp, the glory of God appeared in judgment. The manifestation of God's glory strikes terror to a sinful heart, but what glorious anticipation to be able to behold His glory when standing clothed in the righteousness of Christ!

Two wonderful facts make this city the manifestation of the fullness of God's glory. (1) The presence of God makes the city the source of glory for the universe. Every blessing radiates from the city. (2) The presence of the saints does not forbid the manifestation of the glory of God. Sin caused God to remove His glory from man's presence, but in this city all that is past. Redeemed man dwelling with God in a city "having the glory of God" is the grand goal which is worthy of God. This city reveals the high purpose of God in the church, which is to bring "many sons unto glory" (see [Heb. 2:10](#)).

The word translated "light" (phoster) is the Greek word for source of light. The city is a light giver. It does not reflect light as does the moon, nor does it generate light by physical combustion like the sun, but it originates light and is the source of light. The presence of God and Christ gives explanation to this, as He declared, ". . . I am the light of the world" ([John 9:5](#)). God is light.

The whole city is like a precious gem. This gem is likened unto a jasper stone. The modern jasper is a multicolored quartz stone. The stone referred to here cannot be that, for this stone is not opaque. "Jasper" is a transliteration of the word iaspis, which is of

Semitic origin. Moffatt suggests that iaspis could mean the modern opal, diamond, or topaz.

The stone is transparent and gleaming, which suggests one of these stones, most likely the diamond. The diamond seems to fit the description better than any other stone known to man. The similarity of the Hebrew word for crystal in [Ezekiel 1:22](#) to the Hebrew word for "ice" helps to strengthen this view. The New Jerusalem is a diamond in a gold mounting. This city is the engagement ring of the bride; in fact, it is the wedding ring. It is the symbol of the betrothal and wedding of the church to Christ.

The Gates Of The City (21:12-13)

And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates [[Rev. 21:12-13](#)].

Having a wall great and high; having twelve (large) gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east (day spring) were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

There are twelve gates to the city, three gates on each side. On each gate is the name of one of the tribes of Israel. This is very striking and suggests immediately the order in which the children of Israel camped about the tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings. The tribe of Levi was the priesthood and served in the tabernacle proper. The New Jerusalem is a temple or tabernacle in one sense, for God is there dwelling with man. The bride constitutes the priesthood who serve Him constantly. They serve as such in the city and dwell there as Levi did about the tabernacle.

Everything in eternity will face in toward this city, for God is there. The children of Israel on earth will enjoy the same relationship to the city that they did toward the wilderness tabernacle and later the city temple. This city will be a tabernacle to Israel. The children of Israel will be among the multitudes who come into this city to worship in eternity. They will come from the earth to bring their worship and glory. They will not dwell in the city anymore than they dwelt in the tabernacle of old. Those who actually dwell there will be the priests, who are the bride. The bride occupies the closer place to God in eternity, and the bride, like John in the Upper Room, reclines upon His breast. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? . . ." ([Song 8:5](#)). She is the bride, and she has come up from the wilderness which is this present world. But the twelve tribes of Israel will come up to the celestial city to worship, three tribes coming up on each of the four sides. They will then return back to the earth after a period of worship, but the bride will dwell in the New Jerusalem.

The Foundations Of The City (21:14)

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb [[Rev. 21:14](#)].

This city has twelve foundations, and the names of the twelve apostles are upon them. The church today is ". . . built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" ([Eph. 2:20](#)). When Christ returned to heaven, He committed the keys into the keeping of the apostles. On the human level, the church was in the hands of these twelve men. The Book of Acts gives the order: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen" ([Acts 1:1-2](#)). I do not believe that Matthias is the apostle who succeeded Judas. I personally believe it was Paul. Simon Peter held that meeting to elect Matthias before the Holy Spirit came, and I do not think he was in the will of God when he did so. You never hear Matthias mentioned again, but you surely hear of Paul the apostle, and I think he is the one whom God chose to succeed Judas, making Paul the twelfth apostle.

To these twelve apostles were committed all the writings of the church. These men preached the first sermons, they organized the first churches, and they were among the first martyrs. It is not honoring to Scripture to attempt to minimize the importance of the twelve apostles. In a real sense they were the foundation of the church. To them the church shall eternally be grateful. This is not to rob Christ of His place, for He is "the chief corner stone," but the church is built upon the foundation which the apostles laid.

The Size And Shape Of The City (21:15-16)

And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

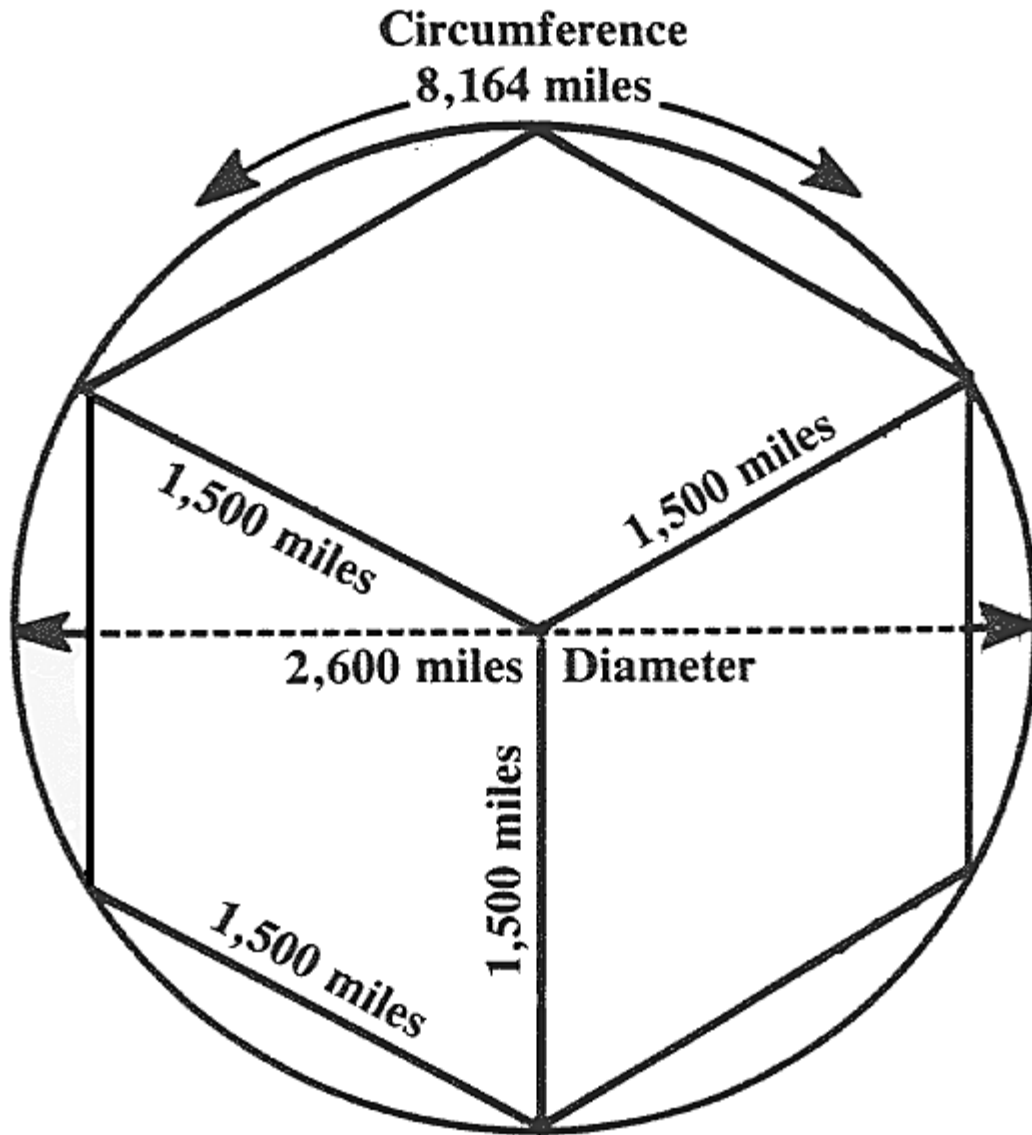
And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal [[Rev. 21:15-16](#)].

The shape of this city is really difficult to describe, due largely to our inability to translate our concepts from a universe of time to the new creation of eternity. The measurements of the city have given rise to all sorts of conceptions as to the size and shape of the city. First of all, let us examine the size of the city. Twelve thousand furlongs is given as the measurement of each side and the height of it. It is twelve thousand stadia in the text, which means about fifteen hundred miles. This figure is corroborated by Dr. Seiss, Dr. Walter Scott, and others. The amplitude of the city is astounding when first considered but is commensurate with the importance of the city. Certainly God as Creator can never be accused of stinting, economizing, or doing things that reveal littleness. When you go down to the beach, you notice that He has put plenty of sand there and plenty of water in the ocean. He has made many mountains and He has put rocks everywhere. With a lavish hand, He has garnished the heavens with stellar bodies. When He does something, He certainly does it in abundance. This city bears the trademark of its Maker. The Lord Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, is the One who built this city.

Now consider with me the shape of the city. "The city lieth foursquare" is the simple declaration of Scripture. That would seem to indicate that the city is a cube with fifteen hundred miles on a side. Dr. Seiss sees it as a cube. Dr. Harry Ironside sees it as a pyramid. Still others interpret these measurements in as many geometric figures as can be

conceived. However, it is difficult for us to conceive of either a cube or a pyramid projected out in space. We are accustomed to thinking of a sphere (that is a ball-shaped object) hanging in space, because that is the general shape of the heavenly bodies. As far as we know, there are none out there that are square like a cube or like a pyramid. Cubes and pyramids are appropriate for earth's buildings, but they are as impractical for space as spheres are impractical for earthly buildings. Yet it is definitely stated that the city is foursquare.

The difficulty resolves when we think of the city as a cube within a crystal-clear sphere. What we are given are the inside measurements. I think of it as a big plastic ball with a cube inside, having all eight of its corners touching the sphere. As this involves mathematics, which I could not figure out, I asked both a mathematician and an engineer involved in the space program to determine what the circumference of the sphere would be. They both came up with the same answer. To enclose a cube measuring 1,500 miles on each side, the circumference of the sphere would be about 8,164 miles. The diameter of the moon is about 2,160 miles, and that of the New Jerusalem sphere is about 2,600 miles. Thus, the New Jerusalem will be somewhat larger than the moon, and it will be a sphere like the other heavenly bodies. I personally believe that this is the picture that is given to us here.



Picture: The Size And Shape Of New Jerusalem

My thinking is that we will live inside this sphere, not on the outside. Here on earth, we live on the outside, and that presents a few difficulties. The Lord had to make the law of gravity to hold us on the earth, or we would be flying out into space. We walk on the outside here, but I think that we will walk on the inside of the New Jerusalem.

The Wall Of The City (21:17-18)

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass [[Rev. 21:17-18](#)].

The wall of the city is for protection. A walled city is a safe city. The New Jerusalem is safe, and those who dwell therein dwell in safety. The heavenly Salem will enjoy the

fruits of safety and peace. Made up of those who found peace with God on earth, she will experience the fullness of peace throughout eternity. The walls are a sign that this city has achieved the full meaning of her name -- peace.

The walls are 144 cubits in height or about 216 feet. Herodotus gives the estimation for the walls of ancient Babylon as 50 cubits thick and 200 cubits high. Those walls were built to make the city impregnable. The great height of the walls of the New Jerusalem are but commensurate with the great size of the city. Beauty, rather than protection, is the motive in design. It is a wall with jasper built into it and is generally designated as a jasper wall. The hardest of substances and the most beautiful gem constitute the exterior of the city.

The Stones Of Fire In The Foundation (21:19-20)

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst [[Rev. 21:19-20](#)].

The twelve foundations of the city not only have the names of the twelve apostles, but they are twelve different precious stones. The most beautiful and costly articles known to man are precious stones. These stones express in human terms the magnificence of the city. The superlative degree of gems is used to convey something of the glory of the city to those who now ". . . see through a glass, darkly . . ." ([1Cor. 12:11](#)). We are going to see through it clearly someday.

A close examination of these twelve stones in the foundation reveals a polychromed paragon of beauty; varied hues and tints form a galaxy of rainbow colors. The stones are enumerated as follows:

- 1. Jasper** (Gr: iaspis) -- its color is clear. As mentioned before, this is probably the diamond. It is crystal clear, a reflector of light and color. Dr. Seiss, in speaking of the New Jerusalem, describes it "as clean, and pure, and bright as a transparent icicle in the sunshine."
- 2. Sapphire** (Gr.: sappheiros) -- its color is blue. This stone occurs in [Exodus 24:10](#) as the foundation of God, ". . . and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." Moffatt describes it as a blue stone. Pliny describes it as opaque with gold specks, to which Petrie agrees.
- 3. Chalcedony** (Gr.: chalkedon) -- its color is greenish. It is an agate. Pliny describes it as "a variety of emerald gathered on a mountain in Chalcedon." Robertson says, "Possibly a green silicate of copper."
- 4. Emerald** (Gr.: smaragdos) -- its color is green. Robertson describes it as a green stone.
- 5. Sardonyx** (Gr.: sardonux) -- its color is red. Robertson describes it as white with layers of red.

6. Sardius (Gr.: sardios) -- its color is fiery red. Pliny says that it is the red stone from Sardis. Swete says that it is fiery red.

7. Chrysolyte (Gr.: chrusolithos) -- its color is golden yellow. Moffatt assigns it a golden hue. Robertson says it is a golden color like our topaz.

8. Beryl (Gr.: berullos) -- its color is green. It is like the emerald, says Robertson. Pliny says it is sea green.

9. Topaz (Gr.: topazion) -- its color is greenish yellow. Robertson calls it a golden greenish stone.

10. Chrysoprasus (Gr.: chrusoprasos) -- its color is gold-green. A golden leek, "a leek colored gem," says Robertson. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia describes it as sea green.

11. Jacinth (Gr.: huakinthi) -- its color is violet. It is the color of the hyacinth. Pliny gives the color as violet.

12. Amethyst (Gr.: amethystos) -- its color is purple. Although the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia lists it as a ruby, Robertson gives the color as purple.

The foundations of the New Jerusalem are constructed of the flashing brilliance of rich and costly gems. On the inside is Jesus who, when He was here, was the Light of the World. There He will be the Light of the Universe. Astronauts tell us that in space the colors almost entirely are gray and black -- but wait until you see the New Jerusalem. It is going to light up God's new heavens and new earth as they have never been lighted before. I think it is going to be the most breathtaking sight that you have ever seen. This New Jerusalem is a planet which comes down right out of heaven. Everything is going to revolve around it, and the light will come from there. It truly will be the Jesus Christ Light and Power Company then. The light will shine out in all these brilliant and beautiful colors.

Color is described to us today as dissected light. If you pass a ray of light through a prism, it is broken up into three primary colors: red, blue, and yellow. From these three primary colors come all colors and shades of colors. Light is a requirement for color. Where there is no light, there is no color. Objects of color reveal color to the eye because of their ability to absorb or to reject light rays. A red stone absorbs all the color rays except red; it rejects or throws back to the eye the red ray, which gives it the color of red.

The New Jerusalem is a city of light and a city of color. God is light, and He is there. The city is described as a jasper stone as clear as crystal. All of this color will be coming out and flooding God's universe. The jasper stone is a sphere, and the city, the New Jerusalem, is within. The light shining from within through the jasper stone, acting as a prism, would give every color and shade of color in the rainbow -- colors that you and I have not even thought of yet. The New Jerusalem is, I believe, a new planet, and it is inside a crystal ball. The presence of the primary colors suggests that every shade and tint is reflected from this city. A rainbow that appears after a summer shower gives only a faint impression of the beauty in the coloring of the city of light. Oh, what a glorious place this is!

The City And Street Of Gold (21:21)

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass [[Rev. 21:21](#)].

Notice that [verse 18](#) also says, "and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." We were told at the beginning of this description that this city is transparent. This is the thing that gave me the lead and the key to believe that we will live on the inside and that everything is transparent. This would mean that the light shines from the inside out and goes through these many different-colored stones. Many colors which our natural eyes cannot see today we will be able to see with the new body that we shall have at that time.

We are also told here that the street is pure gold. Personally, I do not care about the asphalt of the place, but there are two things here that impress me. (1) It is not streets (plural) but street (singular) -- this is not a city with many streets. (2) And it is "transparent" -- even the street is transparent; it is gold, but transparent gold.

This leads me again to insist that what we are looking at is the inside of a globe. You could not have cities like we have today without having streets. You would certainly have a traffic jam with just one street. The New Jerusalem has just one street, which would begin at the four gates; it would start around the circle of the globe, go all the way to the top, and then circle and come back down. One would be the entrance and the other the exit. There is just one street, and my viewpoint lends itself to the idea that there is one street. The fact that it is transparent gold means that the light can shine out. There will be nothing to hinder the light, not even the street.

New Relationship -- God Dwelling With Man (21:22-23)

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof [[Rev. 21:22-23](#)].

God lights the new creation directly by His presence. After the entrance of sin into the old creation, God withdrew His presence, and "darkness covered the face of the deep" (see [Gen. 1:2](#)). Then God made use of the physical lights in His universe. He put them up like we put up street lights or lights in our homes. However, in the new creation sin is removed, and He again becomes the source of light. Today the Lord Jesus Christ is the Light of the World in a spiritual sense: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" ([John 8:12](#)).

In the new creation He is the direct physical as well as the spiritual light. In the tabernacle there was the golden lampstand, which is one of the finest pictures of Christ. In the New Jerusalem He is the golden lampstand. The nations of the world will enter the Holy City as the priests entered the Holy Place in the tabernacle for the purpose of worship. The nations of the earth, as well as Israel, will come to the New Jerusalem as the high priest

of old entered the Holy of Holies. Instead of the blood being brought, the Lamb is there in person. What a picture we have here!

The temple, which supplanted the tabernacle back in the nation Israel, was an earthly enclosure for the shekinah glory. It was a testimony to the presence of God and the presence of sin. Where sin existed, God could be approached only by the ritual of the temple. However, in the New Jerusalem sin is no longer a reality but is like a hideous nightmare, even locked out of the closet of memory. The actual presence of God with the redeemed eliminates the necessity for a temple, although the whole city may be thought of as a temple. Some have called attention to the fact that the New Jerusalem is the same shape as the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple where God dwelt: a perfect cube. That is no accident, by the way. In the city of light God is present, and sin is absent; therefore, an edifice of a material substance is no longer necessary. The physical temple was a poor substitute for the presence of God. The New Jerusalem possesses the genuine article -- God in person. It is probably the first place where God will make a personal appearance before man. What a glorious prospect this is!

The New Jerusalem will be independent of the sun and moon for light and life. What a contrast to the earth, which is utterly dependent upon the sun and the moon. It may be that the sun and moon will even be dependent upon the celestial city for power to transmit light, since the One who is the source of light and life will dwell within the city. Neither will light be furnished by the New Jerusalem Light and Power Company. The One who is light will be there, and the effulgence of His glory will be manifested in the New Jerusalem unhindered.

New Center Of The New Creation (21:24-27)

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it [Rev. 21:24].

And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

"And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof." It does not say they will live there, but that they will walk in the light of it. In other words, the New Jerusalem (instead of the sun and the moon) will give light unto the earth.

"And the kings of the earth bring their glory into it." This is my reason for saying that there will be a great deal of traffic commuting back and forth between the New Jerusalem and this earth down here. Not only will Israel come up there to worship, but the nations of the world which have entered eternity will also come up. It will not be their permanent abode, but they will come up there to worship. I believe that the church will be the priests at that time. We are told that we are a priesthood of believers.

And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there [Rev. 21:25].

And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there).

It is nonsense to say that the gates will not be shut at night because there is no night. Therefore, he says that they will not be shut by day. In other words, they are going to throw away the key because there will be no danger. In John's day, a walled city had gates for the purpose of protection. When the gate of a city was closed, it meant that an enemy was on the outside and that they were trying to keep him there.

And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life [[Rev. 21:26-27](#)].

And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

God has apparently accomplished His original purpose with man -- fellowship. He now has a creature who is a free moral agent and who chooses to worship and serve Him eternally.

There can be no night, since the Lamb is the light, and He is eternally present.

The gates are not for protection, and they are never closed. Rather, they are the badge or coat of arms of the bride. Notice that these gates are of pearl. The pearl of great price has been purchased at a great price. In the parable (see [Matt. 13:45-46](#)) that the Lord Jesus gave, the pearl is not Christ whom the sinner buys. What is a sinner to pay for Christ? -- he hasn't anything that he can pay. It is the other way around. The merchant man who bought that pearl was the Lord Jesus Christ, and the pearl is the bride. It is interesting that a pearl is formed by a grain of sand that gets into the body of a little oyster or mollusk of some kind, and that little marine creature begins to put around that grain a secretion that before long makes the pearl. The pearl of great price is margarites in the Greek, and if the church has a name, it is Margaret. The Lord Jesus Christ paid a great price to buy this pearl. This pearl was formed from His side. Someone has said, "I got into the heart of Christ through a spear wound." He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The church will be for the display of His grace throughout eternity to the absolute myriads of God's created intelligences. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" ([Eph. 2:7](#)).

In other words, in eternity you and I will be there on display. They will look at Vernon McGee and say: "Do you see that fellow? He deserved hell, and the Lord Jesus Christ died for him and paid a tremendous price. He trusted Christ; that is all he had to offer. Now look what the Lord Jesus has done for him. He has made him fit for heaven and made him acceptable in the beloved."

The church will be the fairest jewel of all when He makes up His jewels (see [Mal. 3:17-18](#)). When He makes up His jewels, the church is going to be on display. This is the reason that the New Jerusalem will be the center of the new heavens and the new earth.

The Lamb's Book of Life contains the names of the redeemed of all ages. No one who was not redeemed by the blood of Christ will ever be permitted to enter the portals of the New Jerusalem. There is a great gulf fixed between the saved and the lost.

The greatest joy that will capture the heart of the redeemed will be that of abiding in the presence of Christ for eternity. "That where I am, there ye may be also" is what He said in [John 14:3](#). This is heaven, my friend, to be with Him. Revelation is all about Jesus Christ -- He is the centerpiece of God's universe.

Our attention has already been directed to the fact that a redeemed remnant of Israel makes regular visits to the city of God. In [verse 24](#) another group is identified who comes into the city to bring their glory and honor. These are the redeemed gentile nations which will occupy the earth together with Israel for eternity. These nations, like Israel, do not belong to the church, for they are redeemed after the church is removed from the earth (or before the church came into existence). They come as visitors to the city. They come as worshipers. In [Hebrews 12:22](#) we are told there is also present an innumerable company of angels who evidently constitute the servant class. The city is cosmopolitan in character. All nationalities meet there, and the created intelligences of God walk the street of the New Jerusalem.

Among the multitudes, there is not one who will bring defilement or sin. How superior is this city to even the Garden of Eden where the lie of Satan made an entrance for sin. No lie or liar will ever enter the portals of the heavenly Jerusalem. All dwellers and all tourists are not only redeemed from sin but have also lost their taste for sin. They come through the gates which are never closed. The enjoyment of this glorious city is not restricted to the church, although they are the only ones who dwell there.

Jerusalem, the golden, with milk and honey blest!
Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed;
I know not, O I know not what joys await me there;
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.
"Jerusalem the Golden"
-- Bernard of Cluny

What a picture and how inadequately I have dealt with it. Oh, if only you and I both could be lifted up so that we might get a glimpse of the glory of that city and of the glory of the One who is its chief adornment, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the glorious prospect and privilege of being with Him throughout eternity. There is nothing to compare to it!

Chapter 22

THEME: River of the Water of Life, the Tree of Life; the promise of Christ's return; the final invitation

This chapter brings us to the final scenes of this great book of scenic wonders. It likewise brings us to the end of the Word of God. God gives us His final words here, and because they are last words, they have a greater significance. We are brought to the end of man's journey. The path has been rugged. Many questions remain unanswered, many problems

remain unsolved, but man enters into eternity in fellowship again with God, and there all will be answered.

The Bible opens with God on the scene: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Gen. 1:1](#)). It concludes with Him on the scene and in full control of His own. He suffered, He paid a price, and He died -- but the victory and the glory are His, and He is satisfied. [Isaiah 53:11](#) puts it like this: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

River Of The Water Of Life And The Tree Of Life (22:1-5)

Chapter 22 opens with a beautiful description of the New Jerusalem.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was
there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and
yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for
the healing of the nations [[Rev. 22:1-2](#)].

As usual I'll give my own literal translation of the Greek text throughout this chapter.

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Up to this chapter, the New Jerusalem seems to be all mineral and no vegetable. Its appearance is as the dazzling display of a fabulous jewelry store; we wonder if there is no soft grass to sit upon, no green trees to enjoy, and no water to drink or food to eat. However, here are introduced the elements which add a rich softness to this city of elaborate beauty.

There was a river in the first Eden which branched into four rivers. Although there was abundance of water, it is not called the water of life. Eden was a garden of trees among which was the Tree of Life. God kept the way open for man by the shedding of blood (see [Gen. 3:24](#)). In the New Jerusalem there is a river of the Water of Life, and the throne of God is its living fountain supplying an abundance of water.

"The tree of life" is a fruit tree, bearing twelve kinds of fruits each month. There is a continuous supply in abundance and variety. In eternity man will eat and drink. That is a great relief to many of us, I am sure. The menu is varied but is restricted to fruits, as it was in the Garden of Eden: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so" ([Gen. 1:29-30](#)).

There is a tendency to spiritualize this passage in Revelation and compare it to the fruit of the Spirit. I have no objection to that and would rather take that viewpoint myself, provided we hold to the literal interpretation, which I think you can do through this section. Although it does seem highly symbolic, I think we are dealing with that which is quite literal, for we are still talking about heaven.

Even the leaves of the tree are beneficial -- they have a medicinal value. Why healing is needed in a perfect universe is a very good question and a difficult problem to solve. Perhaps it is a sort of first-aid kit which demonstrates the old adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I personally believe that the bodies of the earth dwellers in eternity will be different from the bodies of the believers in the church who are to be like Christ (that is, their bodies will be like His). The bodies of the earth dwellers may need renewing from time to time. This may be the reason that they come up to the New Jerusalem -- not only to worship, but also to be renewed physically and spiritually. At least the prevention is there.

However, the possibility of sin entering simply is not there.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever [[Rev. 22:3-5](#)].

And there shall be no curse anymore: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall do Him service: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The first creation was blighted by the curse of sin, and this old earth on which you and I live today bears many scar marks of the curse of sin. The new creation will never be marred by sin. Sin will never be permitted to enter even potentially. It was potentially in the Garden of Eden in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The very presence of God and the Lamb will be adequate to prevent it. It was during the absence of God in the Garden of Eden that the tempter came to our first parents.

The throne of God and the Lamb are in the New Jerusalem. It is general headquarters for God the Father and God the Son. The notable absence of any reference to the Holy Spirit does need some explanation. You see, in the first creation the Holy Spirit came to renovate and renew the blighted earth: "The Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters" (see [Gen. 1:2](#)). He is the instrument today of regeneration in the hearts and lives of sinners. There will be no need of His work in the new creation in this connection; therefore the silence of God at this point is eloquent.

"His servants shall do Him service" reveals that heaven is not a place of unoccupied idleness but a place of ceaseless activity. It will not be necessary to rest in order to give

the body an opportunity to recuperate. The word for "service" is a peculiar one. In his Word Studies in the New Testament Dr. Vincent says, "It came to be used by the Jews in a very special sense, to denote the service rendered to Jehovah by the Israelites as His peculiar people." We read this in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. . . . Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God" ([Heb. 9:1, 6](#)). It will be a peculiar service to God that you and I will perform in eternity. What it is, I do not know. He may give us charge of universes. There will be ceaseless activity since there is no night. Man will at last fulfill his destiny and satisfy the desires of his heart.

Man will at last see His face. This was the supreme desire voiced by Moses in the Old Testament and Philip in the New Testament. It is the highest objective for living. What divine satisfaction!

"His name shall be in their foreheads." Each person will bear the name of Christ. Each will be like Him, yet without disturbing his own peculiar personality. I have always said this facetiously, but it could be true: If He will, I want God to let me teach the Bible in heaven. I want to attend the classes which Paul teaches, and then I would like to teach those people who were members of the churches I served on the earth but who would not attend the midweek Bible studies. I have asked to teach them for one million years and, I tell you, they won't think it is heaven for that first million years! I am really going to work them and make them catch up. Whether that will be true or not, I don't know, but I do say that we are all going to be busy there.

Our attention in this section is called to the direct lighting of the new creation. There will be no light holders such as the sun or light reflectors such as the moon. God lights the universe by His presence, for God is light.

It is in eternity that the bride will reign with Christ. Who knows but what He will give to each saint a world or a solar system or a galactic system to operate. Remember that Adam was given dominion over the old creation on this earth.

Promise Of The Return Of Christ (22:6-16)

And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book [[Rev. 22:6-7](#)].

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

The important thing to note is that when He says, "And behold, I come quickly," He means rapidly. This is repeated again in [verse 12](#) and [verse 20](#). It is repeated three times here at the end: "Behold, I come quickly" -- not shortly or immediately or even soon. These events that we have been looking at in Revelation, beginning with chapter 4, take

place in a period of not more than seven years, and most of them are confined to the last three and one-half years. The encouragement here is that the Lord Jesus says that it will not be a long period: "I am coming shortly. I will soon be there." But that means when we get to this period. We are not exactly accurate when we speak of "the soon coming of Christ." I have said that many times myself, but I do not think it is an accurate term, and it gives the wrong impression.

The Lord Jesus puts His own seal upon this book: "These words are faithful and true" means that no man is to trifle with them by spiritualizing them or reducing them to meaningless symbols. Our Lord is talking about reality. At the beginning of this book, there was a blessing pronounced upon those who read and hear and keep these words. In conclusion, the Lord Jesus repeats the blessing upon those who keep these words. This is a book not to merely satisfy the curiosity of the natural man but to live and act upon.

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still [[Rev. 22:8-11](#)].

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See (thou do it) not: I am a fellow servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy let him be made holy still.

Notice John's final and oft-repeated statement that he was both auditor and spectator to the scenes in this book. This is the method that was put down at the very opening of the book. It is the first television program, for John both saw and heard.

John was so impressed that his natural reaction was to fall down and worship the angel. The simplicity and meekness of the angel are impressive. Though the angels were created above man, this angel identifies himself as a fellow servant with John and the other prophets. He was merely a messenger to communicate God's Word to man, and he directs all worship to God. Christ is the centerpiece of the Book of Revelation -- don't lose sight of Him.

"Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book." Daniel was told to seal up the words of his prophecy because of the long interval before the fulfillment of it (see [Dan. 12:4](#)). In fact, we in the twentieth century have not come to the Seventieth Week of

Daniel yet. In contrast, the prophecy given to John was even then in process of being fulfilled. For nineteen hundred years, the church has been passing through the time periods of the seven churches given in chapters 2 -- 3.

"He that is unrighteous . . . he that is filthy" -- probably the most frightful condition of the lost is revealed here, even more so than at the Great White Throne judgment of chapter 20. The sinful condition of the lost is a permanent and eternal thing, although it is not static, for the suggestion is that the unrighteous will increasingly become more unrighteous: "he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still." The condition of the lost gets worse until each becomes a monster of sin. This thought is frightful!

On the other hand, neither is the condition of the servant of God static. They will continue to grow in righteousness and holiness. Heaven is not static. Even in the Millennium "of the increase of His kingdom there shall be no end." What a glorious and engaging prospect this should be for the child of God! We shall have all eternity to grow in knowledge.

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star [[Rev. 22:12-16](#)].

Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they that wash their robes, in order that theirs shall be authority over the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolators, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

The church should know this program of God. Either the angel is bearing a very personal word from Jesus, or else the Lord is breaking through and saying it personally. Our Lord promises that He is coming again. That is His personal declaration. No believer can doubt or deny this all-important and personal promise of the Lord Jesus.

He will personally reward each believer individually -- those in the church at the Rapture as well as those of Israel and the Gentiles at His return to set up His Kingdom at the Millennium.

It is little wonder that Paul could write: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" ([Phil. 3:10-14](#)).

Again the Lord Jesus asserts His deity: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." He said this at the beginning of Revelation, and He concludes with it.

Only blood-washed believers have authority over the Tree of Life and access to the Holy City (see [Eph. 1:7-12](#)).

"Dogs" come off rather badly in Scripture. This perhaps does not mean that there will be no dogs in heaven, but because dogs were scavengers in the ancient world they were considered unclean and impure. Also, "dogs" was the designation for Gentiles (see [Matt. 15:21-28](#)) and Paul's label for Judaizers (see [Phil. 3:2](#)).

Apparently the Lord Jesus had sent His angel with this very personal message. "I Jesus" - He takes the name of His saviorhood, the name He received when He took upon Himself humanity, and the name that no man knows but He Himself. You and I are going to spend eternity just centering on Him and His person. My friend, if you are not interested in Jesus today, I do not know why you would want to go to heaven. That is all we are going to talk about up there; we are going to talk about Him.

He is called "the root and the offspring of David," which connects Him with the Old Testament. But He is "the bright and morning star" to the church. Have you noticed that the bright and morning star always appears at the darkest time of the night? Its appearance indicates that the sun will be coming up shortly. The Old Testament ended with the promise that "the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings" -- that is the Old Testament hope (see [Mal. 4:2](#)). But to us, He is the Bright and Morning Star who will come at a very dark moment.

Final Invitation And Warning (22:17-19)

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book [[Rev. 22:17-19](#)].

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

The bride is the church. This is a twofold invitation -- an invitation to Christ to come and an invitation to sinners to come to Christ before He returns. The Holy Spirit is in the world today, and He joins in the prayer of the church which says, "Lord Jesus, come, come."

The Holy Spirit is performing His work in the world today in converting and convicting men. He works through the Word and through the church which proclaims His Word. The invitation to men is to come and to take the Water of Life: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters . . . without money and without price" ([Isa. 55:1](#)). The Lord Jesus stood and said, ". . . If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" ([John 7:37](#)). That is the invitation that goes out today. If you are tired of drinking at the cesspools of this world, He invites you to come. What an invitation this is to come to Him!

Final Promise And Prayer (22:20-21)

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen [[Rev. 22:20-21](#)].

He who testifieth these things saith, Yes: I come quickly. Amen: Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

"Yea: I come quickly" -- not soon, but when these things begin to come to pass, He is even then at the door.

"Come, Lord Jesus" is the heart cry of every true believer.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The Old Testament ends with a curse; the New Testament ends with a benediction of grace upon the believers. Grace is offered to all, but if any man (regardless of his merit) refuses the offer which is extended, he must bear the judgment pronounced in this book.

Grace is still offered to man. It is God's method of saving sinners.
Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.
-- John Newton

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